

R. Eugene Parta

UNDER THE RADAR

Tracking **Western Radio Listeners** in the Soviet Union



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R. E U G E N E P A R T A



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“No one is better qualified than Gene Parta to explain how during the Cold War RFE/RL measured the size of its audience, examined the attitudes and opinions of its listeners, and used that data to help shape the broadcasts. In this well written, superbly researched, and deeply personal book, Parta takes us inside the audience research operations, shows us how data was collected and assessed, and paints memorable sketches of individuals who worked at RFE/RL.

As we now enter a new Cold War, Parta’s book serves as an all-important guide and inspiration for a new generation of researchers who must grapple with ever evolving technologies, audience fragmentation, social media, and Russian disinformation campaigns and cyberattacks.”

MARK POMAR, Senior Fellow at Clements Center
for National Security, University of Texas, author of
*Cold War Radio: The Russian Broadcasts of the Voice
of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*

“An essential intellectual adventure into the depths of the Cold War, with essential lessons for today. Parta shows that Russia is not a riddle wrapped in an enigma – it can be understood and influenced. His insights have never been more relevant.”

PETER POMERANTSEV, Senior Fellow at the SNF
Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University,
author of *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible:
The Surreal Heart of Modern Russia*

“In this fascinating history, Gene Parta describes the creative measures employed by Radio Liberty to acquaint itself with its huge but unknown audience in the Soviet Union. With the help of travelers, émigrés, and letter writers, Parta and his group of Paris-based researchers compiled a portrait of their audience which enabled Radio Liberty to tailor its broadcasts to their concerns and become one of the most important contributors to America’s victory in the Cold War.”

DAVID SATTER, Former Moscow Correspondent of
the *Financial Times* and author of *Age of Delirium:
The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Union*

*To all my former colleagues in SAAOR
in Paris and MOR in Munich, and
in memory of A. Ross Johnson for his
steadfast support and collaboration.
My family, Lynne, Rolf, and Max, were
a stronghold throughout a tumultuous time.*

About the Author

RUSSELL EUGENE (GENE) PARTA retired as Director of Audience Research and Program Evaluation for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Prague in 2006. Previously, Mr. Parta was Director of Media and Opinion Research of the RFE/RL Research Institute in Munich and earlier Director of Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research of Radio Liberty in Paris. He has worked in the field of international broadcasting audience research since 1969. He served as Chairman of CIBAR (Conference on International Broadcasting Audience Research that brings together researchers from over 20 international broadcasting organizations). He is a graduate of St. Olaf College and the School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University and has been a visiting research associate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on two occasions as well as at George Washington University. Mr. Parta was an Osher Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University in 2004 researching his earlier book *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR During the Cold War* and a Visiting Scholar at the Hoover Institution in 2017-2018 researching this book in the RFE/RL Corporate Archives. He is co-editor with A. Ross Johnson of *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS · ix

INTRODUCTION

Why a History of Audience Research at Radio Liberty? · 1

PRELUDE (1953–1965)

My Road to Radio Liberty (*amabile*) · 9

FIRST MOVEMENT (1965–1970)

Early Years of Audience Research at Radio Liberty (*andante*) · 17

SECOND MOVEMENT (1970–1980)

First Steps in Audience Interviewing (*accelerato*) · 55

THIRD MOVEMENT (1980–1985)

Audience Research Breaks New Ground (*sforzando*) · 95

FOURTH MOVEMENT (1986–1990)

Perestroika Changes the Game (*fuocoso*) · 171

FIFTH MOVEMENT (1991–1994)

The End of the USSR and the Post-Soviet Transition
(*vittorioso, capriccioso, lamentoso*) · 281

POSTLUDE (2022)

Past Successes, Future Challenges (*coda*) · 325

AFTERWORD

Ukraine 2022: The Information War (*agitato*) · 333

APPENDIX I

Charts Referenced in Narrative · 341

APPENDIX 2

Some of Those Who Crossed My Path: Max Ralis, Ross Johnson, James Critchlow, Morrill "Bill" Cody, Ralph Walter, James Buckley, Eugene Pell, William W. Marsh, Viktor Nekrasov, Andrei Sinyavsky, Victor Grayevsky, Irina Alberti, Helmut Aigner, Christopher Geleklidis, Steen Sauerberg, Copenhagen interviewer · 355

APPENDIX 3

The MIT Connection and Computer Simulation · 377

APPENDIX 4

Some Examples of SAAOR Reporting and Survey Questions Asked · 387

APPENDIX 5

Profiles of the SAAOR Team · 399

BIBLIOGRAPHY · 407

INDEX · 411

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Just as SAAOR's work was a team effort, so has been work on this book. I'm truly grateful for the widespread assistance I've had from many sources in pulling this unusual account together.

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Former colleague and good friend, A. Ross Johnson, to my great sorrow passed away in early 2021 and did not see the completion of this work. He strongly encouraged me at the outset of the project and gave helpful advice on the annotated outline that I shared with him. Ross and I had further projects planned together that now we will be unable to complete. His passing was a great loss to the entire community that has been involved with the history of RFE/RL.

Robert Gillette wrote stirring tributes to his former colleagues, Ross Johnson and Gene Pell, and I’m grateful to him for granting me permission to use excerpts from them.

Colleagues from MIT, John Klensin, Ph.D. and Ree Dawson, Ph.D. were indispensable to the work of SAAOR over the years as the methodology developed along with our computer capabilities and I’m grateful to them for their contributions to the appendix on methodology.

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I would be remiss if I didn’t recognize the steadfast support I received from my family: wife Lynne and sons Rolf and Max. Not only did they put up with my many absences during my working years but their love and encouragement has helped make this book possible.

Needless to say, any errors or omissions in the book are entirely my own.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Why a History of Audience Research at Radio Liberty?

“Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.”

John F. Kennedy

“Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy”

Ludwig van Beethoven

Western democracy is currently under attack by a resurgent Russia, which has exploited new technologies and social media to weaponize false information with the goal of undermining national elections and policy decisions in the Western world. The threat is not a new one. The Soviet Union used the means available to it at the time to much the same purpose. During the Cold War the West successfully resisted Soviet propaganda, and used truthful information denied to the Soviet audience to help bring about the eventual demise of the USSR.

How can the West respond most effectively today? How can we seize the initiative? This has been made a high priority since the second Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

The lessons of the past provide valuable help in countering the renewed threat from our once and current adversary. This book details an unusual Cold War operation whose purpose was to assess the role and impact of Western information beamed to the USSR in the form of shortwave radio broadcasts. It shows how outside information helped to transform a closed society, and draws inferences relevant to the current situation.

Western radio broadcasts to the communist world are widely acknowledged to have played a key role in ending the Cold War and eroding the communist empire. Political figures and ordinary citizens in the countries concerned, as well as Western scholars and government officials, agree that the broadcasts were crucial. In my previous book, *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR during the Cold War*,¹ I presented empirical evidence attesting to the impact of the broadcasts.

1 Published by the Hoover Institution Press at Stanford University in 2007.

A second work that I co-edited with A. Ross Johnson, *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*,² included once-secret documents and official testimonials from the target countries that documented the broadcasts' influence.

It is estimated that about one-third of the urban adult Soviet population and about one-half of the Eastern European adult population listened to Western radio broadcasts after the 1950s, and that the information they contained was passed on to a much broader audience by word-of-mouth.³

How do we know this? Thanks to survey research carried out among Soviet citizens traveling in the West. During the Cold War, these findings were an invaluable resource for the major Western broadcasters to the USSR. But how was this data gathered? How was it analyzed? By whom? In what conditions?

When we delve a little further, more questions arise. Why did Soviet people believe some media and not others? What led so many of them to distrust Soviet domestic media? What convinced them to trust Western media in the Cold War context? What lessons learned from the Cold War experience remain relevant for today?

These are some of the questions this book attempts to answer.

Under the Radar explores the methods used and the challenges faced by RFE/RL's Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research department (SAAOR) which I directed for many years. RFE/RL was a US-funded radio station, based in Munich, which broadcast to the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union, and to five countries of Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania), in their own languages, aiming to serve each one as a surrogate home service, broadcasting uncensored news and information to societies where all media were controlled by their communist governments. The specific task of SAAOR was to study the influence of broadcasts by Radio Liberty and other Western stations on the mindset of Soviet citizens. Our operations covered the almost forty-year period between 1956 and 1994.

At its inception in 1956, SAAOR⁴ was facing what Stanford University scholar Wilbur Schramm considered a near impossible challenge: "By the rules of

2 Published by the Central European University Press, Budapest, in 2010.

3 See Johnson and Parta, eds., *Cold War Broadcasting*, 345.

4 SAAOR underwent a number of name changes during its existence. From 1956 to 1979 it was the Audience Research Division of Radio Liberty (ARD). From 1980 to 1991 it was SAAOR (Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research), and then finally MOR (Media and Opinion Research of the RFE/RL Research Institute) from 1991 to 1994.

the game, 95 per cent of all the sophisticated methods available to researchers in Western countries are foreclosed from use.”⁵

Nevertheless, over time, SAAOR developed audacious and innovative methods of survey interviewing and collected an impressive amount of data. Over 51,000 structured interviews were conducted with Soviet travelers to the West, and over 15,000 detailed interviews were completed with emigrants from the USSR. These two separate databases are now archived at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. They serve as an empirical basis upon which to evaluate the role played by Western broadcasters such as Radio Liberty, Voice of America, BBC, and Deutsche Welle, and offer a unique window on the attitudes of the Soviet public during the Cold War.

SAAOR's research became the benchmark for knowledge of Soviet attitudes, media use, behavior, and public opinion during much of the second half of the twentieth century. Our research methods allowed us to shed light on sensitive areas that were off-limits to Western researchers during most of the period. Our reporting became the accepted standard of audience measurement for all the major Western broadcasters to the USSR. On several occasions Radio Liberty survived attacks from US government officials and members of Congress because SAAOR could demonstrate that the station had a sizeable and serious audience in the USSR. When other international broadcasters had to contend with bureaucratic budgetary battles, they too used SAAOR data to defend their mission to skeptical oversight bodies.

Under the Radar is not intended to be an analytical study but rather a personalized narrative account of SAAOR's work. *Discovering the Hidden Listener* outlined the findings of SAAOR's survey research, and *Under the Radar* picks up the story by recounting how this work was accomplished. Like the survey work itself, this book is very much a team effort, but in the interests of coherence, I have been persuaded (albeit reluctantly) to cast it as a first-person narrative.

As a manager I considered my personal style more as the conductor of an orchestra than as a boss in the traditional sense of the term. I saw my role as leading an ensemble of highly talented virtuosos, giving each one freedom to perform but also bringing them together to turn out a polished research product. If all went well, that polished product could resemble a well-constructed symphony.

Classical music has been a passion of mine for as long as I can remember. To my mind, composing this book has resembled the process of composing a symphony.

5 Letter from Wilbur Schramm to Howland Sargeant, 19 October 1962, HIA.

It was written with classical music streaming in the background (thank you WETA and Radio Suisse Classique!). I would venture to say that SAAOR's research process, moving through various stages of development over time, can also be compared to the progression of a symphony. One classical reference that comes to mind is Mendelssohn's Fifth Symphony, the *Reformation*, which moves through historical time to a conclusion. Another is Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, the *Pastorale*, which has five movements rather than the usual four, as does the SAAOR "symphony." Prolonging the musical conceit throughout the text, I have taken the liberty of beginning with a Prelude, concluding with a Coda, and labeling the sections in between as Movements. Appropriate musical notation has been added in. I hope the reader will forgive this piece of authorial self-indulgence!

The *Prelude (amabile)* traces my personal road to Radio Liberty and explains how I first became involved in this unique broadcasting operation in New York in 1965.

The *First Movement – 1956–1970 (andante)* switches the focus to audience research. It describes early attempts by RL's Audience Research Division (ARD) to come to grips with listeners in the USSR in the 1950s, and recounts how I joined ARD in Munich in 1969 with the brief of systematizing listener interviews. In 1970, an ARD office was set up in Paris, a more effective headquarters from which to conduct a European-wide survey of Soviet travelers, and I moved there in 1971.

The *Second Movement – 1970–1980 (accelerato)* covers the Brezhnev "period of stagnation" from 1970 to 1980. The Soviet government was concerned above all with upholding the status quo, but one innovation was the authorization of limited Jewish emigration from the USSR. This allowed ARD to extend interviewing efforts to Soviet emigrants in Rome and Israel. In parallel, we expanded interviewing of Soviet travelers to the West and ultimately accumulated sufficient data to produce our first reliable estimates of audience size, using advanced computer simulation methods pioneered by specialists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In the early 1970s, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were threatened with closure in light of revelations that they had been created and funded by the CIA. After due investigation by a Congressional commission, they were given a new independent status and allowed to continue broadcasting, but ordered to merge as RFE/RL in 1976.

ARD had maintained offices in London and Munich as well as Paris throughout the 1970s, but in 1980 the three offices were consolidated in Paris, and the department was renamed Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research (SAAOR).

Dr. Max Ralis, who had run audience research operations since 1956, retired in 1981, and I took over as the head of SAAOR. Our activities expanded rapidly throughout the 1980s as new, talented staff members were brought in.

The *Third Movement* – 1980–1985 (*sforzando*) describes how we invested in new interviewing areas in Europe and Asia, provided more frequent and more reliable audience estimates, computerized the office, and branched out into attitudinal research. By now we were in the forefront of media and opinion research into the Soviet Union. No other Western organization could provide comparable data. We were able to gauge Soviet views on such topics as the downing of a Korean Airlines airliner by a Soviet fighter, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, while our audience estimates had become the “industry standard” for the major Western broadcasters to the USSR.

The Third Movement gives a detailed account of the procedural methods used to carry out research into the “denied” area that was the USSR: How the interviewers made contact with Soviet travelers in Western capitals, how they won their confidence, how they steered the conversation round to a discussion of Western radio listening. From the start of the project in 1970 it had been understood that interview questionnaires could never be shown to the Soviet respondents both for fear of alarming them and calling the attention of others, especially group leaders, to the fact that a formal interview was taking place. Information on radio listening was acquired in the course of an informal but highly structured conversation. Methodological safeguards were installed at every step of the way to avoid data corruption.

The *Fourth Movement* – 1986–1990 (*fuocoso*) covers the period of glasnost and perestroika, when the Soviet Union began to open up. By the end of the decade SAAOR was able to administer questionnaires openly to Soviet travelers in the West and in Eastern Europe as well. Not long afterwards we began in-country interviewing. After twenty years of informal interviews, we were finally able to use conventional Western survey research interviewing methods! We made great strides in all areas of our research. We began to conduct focus groups on RL programming, first with Soviet emigrants, then with Soviet travelers, and finally with Soviet citizens in their own country. In September 1990 I made my first ever trip to the USSR to observe focus groups in Moscow, and coordinate preliminary survey work in Moscow and Kyiv. The end of 1990 saw a sea change in our operations when RFE/RL inaugurated a Research Institute on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. SAAOR was to be an integral part of this, and it required us to move back to Munich from Paris. From now on I was the head of

both the Soviet and the Eastern European audience research departments, which were fused into a new unit called Media and Opinion Research (MOR).

The *Fifth Movement* – 1991–1994 (*vittorioso, capriccioso, lamentoso*) is set in the period immediately before and after the dissolution of the USSR. 1991 was a tumultuous year. In March our research operation was attacked on Soviet television, in August hardliners attempted a putsch to oust Gorbachev, in September Yeltsin invited RFE/RL to open a bureau in Moscow, and in December, in a televised address to the nation, Gorbachev declared the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics defunct. More drama erupted in October 1993 when government troops stormed the parliament building (the White House). MOR had lost no time in developing a network of survey research institutes throughout the broadcast area, and we were able to show how RL broadcasts had kept the Russian public informed throughout the upheavals.

With the collapse of the Soviet system, and the former Soviet Union taking its first steps on the rocky road to democracy, it seemed advisable to know how members of the societal elite were approaching the transition. We inaugurated a series of studies on Russian “decision makers.” The results made it plain that Western radio, and RL in particular, was playing an important role in informing and influencing the movers and shakers in the new Russian society. In a further attempt to understand how the Soviet people were dealing with their changed political circumstances, we signed a partnership agreement with the Swiss-based International Research Institute on Social Change (RISC), and took our first step in socio-graphics. Our partnership with RISC allowed us to begin mapping the structure of public opinion and process of change in the country as a whole.

This would have been a major step forward, but sadly it was ended before it could deliver its full potential. RFE/RL fell victim to the “peace dividend” sought by the US government at the end of the Cold War, and its budget was reduced by almost two-thirds. The Radio survived this process by moving to Prague in a greatly scaled-down structure, but there were no longer sufficient funds for the RFE/RL Research Institute. The Institute was closed at the end of 1994, and the Radios moved to Prague in 1995. Some MOR staffers were relocated to Washington and this new unit continued under the name of InterMedia for several years, but was unable to undertake more than basic audience research work for RFE/RL. And thus our effort to understand public opinion in the former Soviet Union came to a premature end.

The final section of this book, the *Coda*, explains how the lessons learned from SAAOR’s work are still relevant thirty years later, in a world threatened by

authoritarianism and cyberwarfare, and concludes with a proposal as to how the US international media program might be strengthened to protect and promote democracy. With Russia closing down all independent media in an attempt to cut off Russian society from information on the Ukraine war of 2022, this is now of vital importance. An Afterword will examine the “information war” surrounding the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Appendices to the text provide the charts and tables referred to in the narrative, as well as vignettes of some of the distinctly unusual personalities with whom SAAOR had the privilege to work, and a technical exposition of the MIT computer simulation model. Certain footnotes are referenced with HIA or REP. HIA stands for Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University where the RFE/RL corporate records are kept. REP stands for my personal papers which will eventually be archived in the RFE/RL corporate records at the Hoover Institution as well.

P R E L U D E

My Road to Radio Liberty

1953-1965

a m a b i l e

LIVING IN HISTORY

Radio Liberty is an American radio station, founded in 1953, that broadcast to the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and is still active on digital media, radio, and TV in the Russian Federation, most of the ex-Soviet republics, and Afghanistan. During the Cold War, its mission was to provide uncensored information to a closed society where freedom of information was non-existent.

I worked for Radio Liberty from 1965 to 2006, a period of over forty years that spanned what the Chinese would call “interesting times,” beginning in the Brezhnev era in early 1965 and ending during Putin’s second presidential term in 2006. All but one of those years were spent in Europe, and nearly all of them were devoted to audience research. A working life spent studying international broadcasting to a closed society may seem like an unusual career arc for a boy from out-state Minnesota with no direct ties to Russia, but my choice was influenced by my early years.

As an adolescent, I dreamt naively of what I thought of as “living in History”—as opposed to living in some provincial backwater somewhere. My improbable dreams were encouraged by my mother June (a big-city girl) and my grandmother Lempi (who in her heart never left her native New England), and shaped by the overseas wartime experiences of my father Russell (US Army in the Pacific) and my uncle Eugene (US Naval Intelligence in Europe). My dreams came true, but in ways I could never have imagined at the time. I certainly didn’t expect to live in history to quite the extent that I did.

Although I had a typical Midwestern boyhood (school athletics, hunting, fishing, dating, summers at the lake cabin), I did not come from a typical Mid-

western family. My grandfather, Carl A. Parta, had been born on the Finnish-Swedish border (as Karl A. Mustaparta) and emigrated to the US as a child around 1890. He became the publisher of what grew into the most widely circulated Finnish-language newspaper in North America. Originally the *Minnesotan Uutiset* (*Minnesota News*), it became the *Amerikan Uutiset* as its circulation eventually expanded to cover the whole country.

As a young man, Carl had worked for a series of left-wing Finnish-language newspapers in Canada, the West Coast, and the Eastern US, but during the Depression of the 1930s he decided it was time to move on from left-wing Finnish-American politics in New England. A few years before I was born in 1940, the family relocated from Massachusetts to Minnesota. On arriving in Minnesota, Carl co-founded a newspaper which was politically independent. This was unusual at a time when most Finnish-language newspapers in the US were sponsored by either political or religious organizations. Its title used the neutral word “News” (*Uutiset*) eschewing the militant “Forward” (*Eteenpäin*) used by his former newspaper in Worcester. Given Carl’s background, we were inevitably a political family, though we were not directly engaged. Small town life didn’t allow for that, especially in the newspaper business in the 1950s. Still, political discussions were common in our household.

Thanks to Carl’s ties with the wider North American Finnish-language community, he was on the State Department’s visiting list for Finnish dignitaries, including government officials and cultural figures, who came to the US after the war. My grandparents lived across the street from us, and I was often present when they hosted these visitors from Finland (my grandmother set a great table!). I remember lying on the floor in the evenings by the crackling fireplace attentively taking in their painful but fascinating stories of the Finnish-Russian winter war of 1939–40, and Finland’s delicate post-war relations with the Soviet Union. I was still a young boy, but these tales aroused in me a keen interest in Russia, the Soviet Union, and the nascent Cold War. I listened eagerly to the news on the radio, and combed the newspapers for anything that had to do with international politics and the USSR. I followed with trepidation the ebb and flow of the American front lines across the Korean peninsula during the Korean War. At the same time, I learned the printing and newspaper business from the ground up by working in the family business after school and on weekends. But my sights were set beyond the limits of my rural neighborhood, and I was mentally preparing myself for the day when I would step on to a larger stage.

My name already reflected that wider political world. I was christened Russell Eugene, a far cry from names such as Heikki and Toivo that were customarily given in Finnish-American families at that time. Russell is my father's name, and Eugene is my uncle's. My father was born in August 1918, at a time when the English philosopher Bertrand Russell was leading the international peace campaign during the last year of World War I. My uncle was born in 1912, the year that the socialist Eugene V. Debs stood for US President.

Both these names, of course, had been chosen by Carl and Lempi. Later in life, my grandfather abandoned the idealistic ethnic left-wing politics of his youth and became a full-fledged American patriot who supported Roosevelt's New Deal, served as Chairman of the County Military Draft Board during World War II, and headed the Minnesota State Committee for Finnish relief after the Winter War of 1940. Despite this, I recall a lot of urgent whispered conversations among the adults in the family during the McCarthy "red scare" period of the early 1950s, when all past left-wing political activity was grounds for suspicion, whatever your current situation and politics might be. Because of McCarthy, ideological zealotry of any stripe has always made me uncomfortable. I suppose my work for Radio Liberty could be branded "anti-communist," but I always took care to steer clear of political fanaticism. I preferred to see myself as working to advance the cause of democracy and human rights, although I was certainly aware of the political strategies involved.

Carl died in 1955, and my father, Russell O. Parta, who had joined the family publishing and printing business on his return from World War II, carried on publishing the Finnish newspaper, along with several local English-language newspapers. Like Carl, my father was on the State Department's Finnish visitor destination list. He was even decorated by the Finnish government for his contribution to US-Finland relations. This proved helpful to me in later years.

After graduating from high school in 1958, I began to study Russian at St. Olaf College, a highly regarded liberal arts college in Northfield, Minnesota. My teacher, Astrid Hartmanis Ivask, was a Latvian refugee whose father had been a general in the Latvian Army in 1940, when the country was forcibly annexed by the USSR. I took every course dealing with Russia that St. Olaf offered, and supplemented it during my junior year with course work on Soviet foreign policy in the American University's Washington Semester program. This was followed by a summer at Harvard doing course work on the sociology of the USSR and attending lectures on political philosophy from the eminent American critic of Marxism, Sidney Hook. But what influenced me the most that summer was a

series of lectures by Viktor Frankl, the Viennese psychiatrist who had survived Auschwitz and written *Man's Search for Meaning*. I attended all the lectures, which were open to the public, and I recall feeling a shiver go down my spine when I heard the emotional statement with which he ended one lecture: "Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know man as he really is. After all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord's Prayer or the Shema Yisrael on his lips."¹

By this time, I knew where I was going, and, after graduating from St. Olaf, I attended graduate school at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, DC, where I concentrated on Soviet Area studies. My aim had originally been to join the American diplomatic corps, and I took and passed the highly competitive Foreign Service entrance exam. But the Vietnam war was beginning to make me wonder whether a Foreign Service career was really what I wanted.

At SAIS, I had taken a course in US military and security policy, and attended a series of lectures by the former Assistant Secretary of State for South-East Asian Affairs, Roger Hilsman. Hilsman questioned the wisdom of US policy on the war in Vietnam, and for this he had been fired from his State Department post by President Johnson. Largely as a result of Hilsman's eye-opening seminars, I had doubts about the Vietnam war well before anti-war dissent was popular on US campuses (though I never believed the country or the government was fascist, and I never spelled America with a "k"). My opposition to the war was on policy grounds, not misguided convictions of moral depravity. My one and only demonstration was in August 1963, when I joined Martin Luther King's historic civil rights March on Washington.

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH RADIO LIBERTY

In September 1962, just before starting at SAIS, I had married Lynne Gundersen, whom I met when she spent her freshman year at St. Olaf. Lynne was enrolled in a 5-year nursing program at Columbia University Medical Center in New York and had completed 4 years of studies. She took a leave of absence after our marriage so we could live together in Washington while I was at SAIS. (I persuaded

¹ This quote, which lodged in my memory, is found at the end of Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*. I first bought this at Harvard under its original title, *From Death Camp to Existentialism*.

her that if I spent every weekend running up to New York to see her I would flunk out.) A full scholarship given by the school, with additional money for living expenses, made things easier. We agreed that we would go back to New York when I had done my two years of course work, so she could finish her degree at Columbia. During her stay in Washington, Lynne worked as a private nurse. One of her patients, who had been Chief of Protocol at the State Department, passed on an irreverent description of his one-time boss, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles: dull, duller, Dulles!

So it was that in 1964, I put all thoughts of diplomatic work in the Foreign Service on hold. We packed a U-Haul van with our meager possessions and moved back to New York, where Lynne's family lived. I wanted a job that fitted in with my family background and my academic history. Thanks to this move it landed right in my lap.

In the summer of 1964, I interviewed with both Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe and filled out several detailed personnel forms at each station. Publicly RFE was quite well known, while RL kept a lower profile. At this time, at the height of the Cold War, both East and West made extensive use of radio broadcasts. On the communist side the "voices" included stations such as Radio Moscow and Radio Prague. On the Western side, stations such as the BBC, Voice of America (VOA), Deutsche Welle, and Radio Sweden attempted to explain the way of life and political positions of their sponsoring countries.

The mission of RL and RFE was somewhat different. They were American-sponsored broadcasters whose purpose was to function as a surrogate home service for listeners behind the Iron Curtain by providing them with news that they could not obtain from the media in their own countries. To this end, they broadcast only in the languages of their respective target areas. Radio Free Europe focused on Soviet satellite countries with broadcasts in Polish, Bulgarian, Romanian, Hungarian, Czech, and Slovak. Radio Liberty was aimed at the USSR, speaking to its listeners not just in Russian, but also in the languages of the national republics of the Soviet Union. The headquarters of both stations were in New York, but the broadcast operations were located in Munich, Germany.

The goal of the Radios was to encourage dialogue with the peoples of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union by ensuring that they were well informed about events in the world at large and in their own countries. The broadcasts were inspired by the American tradition of promoting basic principles of human dignity, individual freedom, and the rule of law. It was hoped that uncensored communication of information and ideas might influence public opinion, persuade

the communist regimes to soften their confrontational policies on the world stage, and make the world a safer place.²

At the age of 24, I had a limited understanding of what the Radios were, what purpose they served, and how they fitted into the international scene. As a graduate student, I had been critical of RFE, mainly because I misunderstood its role in the Hungarian uprising of 1956. When I found out what the aim of the Radios really was, I changed my mind. Both interviews went well and I hoped something would come of them, but for a long while nothing did. Radio Liberty wrote to say that the position for which I had interviewed hadn't come open, but that they were serious about finding a spot for me in the organization, and that "I shouldn't take this as the normal platitude." Radio Free Europe said they were interested, but that the hiring process would take some time.

By fall I had heard nothing back from either of them, and I was getting impatient. When I got a call from my father in Minnesota, asking if I would be interested in a Press Secretary position on the Democratic congressional campaign in the Seventh District of Minnesota, a large rural district in the northwestern part of the state, I jumped at it. I joined the campaign of Ben Wichtermann, a State Representative who was running for Congress, working as driver, speechwriter, and general factotum. Wichtermann liked to chew tobacco and occasionally spat into a large coffee can which he kept on the car floor in front of him. Driving along at 70 mph, I kept the windows closed for fear of getting the spit blown back at me.

On the campaign I got to meet the top Democrats in the state, President Lyndon Johnson's running mate Hubert Humphrey, and Eugene McCarthy, who was running for re-election to the Senate.³ After a long day on the campaign trail, we would meet up with local activists and other politicians—such as former Governor Orville Freeman and gubernatorial candidate Karl Rolvaag—over cigars and Old Cabin Still whisky (fondly referred to as "Old Stab and Kill") in a motel room somewhere. But in Roseau, Minnesota, up near the Canadian border, I got a call summoning me to New York for a second interview with RFE. I convinced my brother Bob, who was awaiting his Peace Corps assignment to India, to fill in

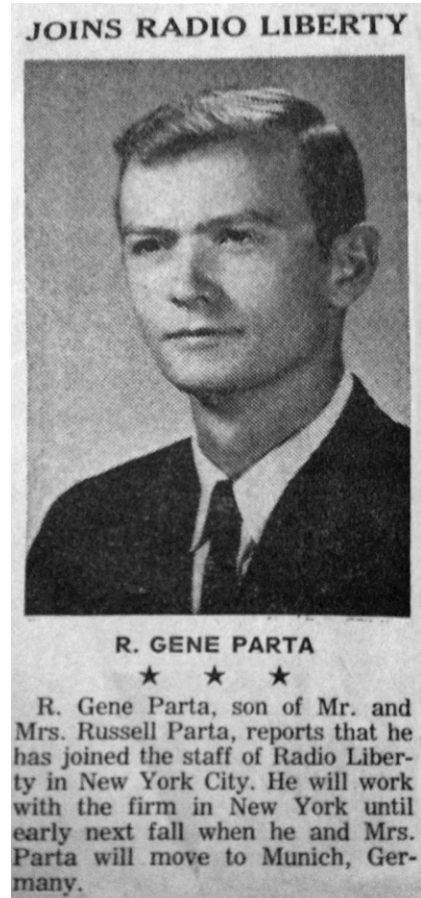
2 A useful summary of these principles can be found in the 1978 Annual Report of the Board for International Broadcasting, "The Mission of Radio Liberty and Radio Liberty Broadcasts," 43, HIA.

3 McCarthy would be a candidate for President in 1968. His win in the New Hampshire primary knocked President Johnson out of the race. Humphrey would later help save RFE and RL when they came under fire in the Senate in the late 1960s.

for me for a couple of days, drove four hours to my parents' home, caught two hours of sleep, and drove another hour to the nearest airport to catch a flight to Minneapolis, with an onward connection to New York.

My meeting was with Ralph Walter and Ernie Schneider of RFE. Walter was a policy officer, and I discovered I was under consideration for a position in RFE's policy office. After drinks at Walter's Upper East Side apartment, we went to Vasata, a Czech restaurant in the neighborhood, and discussed my possible future with RFE over roast duck and Czech dumplings. Walter was a fellow Minnesotan, and like me had attended St Olaf College, before a spell in the army in World War II. It was beginning to look quite promising. I spent the evening with Lynne, and first thing next morning my mother-in-law drove me to Newark Airport to fly back to Minnesota. Half a mile from the terminal, we got stuck in a traffic jam. I had to run to the gate, and barely caught my plane (luckily there were no security checks back then).

My candidate lost the election by several hundred votes, out of over 200,000 cast. I went back to New York and took a holiday job at Macy's while I waited to hear from RFE. (I eventually figured out that the wait was due to the need for a background security check. This was confirmed when a friend from Minnesota let me know that a federal agent had been poking around asking questions about me, and had said that I was being considered for a "serious government position"—even though RFE and RL were ostensibly private organizations.) I was selling fine jewelry, and kept myself amused trying to find the best deal for the customer, instead of selling the bonus items the store wanted me to sell. Finally, right after Christmas, I received a call from RFE asking me to come in. I was informed that the position I had interviewed for at Radio



The Author joins Radio Liberty in February 1965.

Liberty was now open, and RL wanted to hire me. I was a bit surprised to see how job candidates were swapped back and forth between the two organizations, but since Soviet affairs made more sense for me than Eastern Europe, I didn't dwell on it.

I joined Radio Liberty in February 1965 as a special assistant to the President, Howland Sargeant. In the course of that year, Lynne received her diploma from Columbia University, and our first son Rolf was born. After a year in the Office of the President, I was offered the opportunity to go and work for RL in Munich. We left for Europe in January 1966. I thought we would stay for two years at most and then I would either go on to a Foreign Service career if the Vietnam war went away (it didn't), or else return to the US and finish work on a Ph.D. I was anxious to serve my country in the Cold War, only not in Vietnam. Things did not turn out the way I had imagined. Instead of landing a short-term job in Europe, I had found a vocation for the next forty-six years.

F I R S T M O V E M E N T

Early Years of Audience Research at Radio Liberty

1965-1970

a n d a n t e

DISCOVERING RADIO LIBERTY

The office of the Radio Liberty Committee was at 30 E 42nd Street in Manhattan on the corner of Madison Avenue. When I walked in on my first day on the job, I still had only a general idea of what Radio Liberty was. I was ushered into the corner office belonging to the President of the Radio Liberty Committee, Howland H. Sargeant. Sargeant was a former diplomat, who had been an Assistant Secretary of State under President Truman, and had once been married to the actress Myrna Loy. A New England Brahmin, he was an imposing presence behind his large empty desk, and I felt a bit overawed.

We had an amiable conversation about what I might do at Radio Liberty, and the fact that I occupied an unusual position in the organization. It was what they called the “bright young man slot,” meaning someone who would undertake a variety of tasks for the President for one year and then be assigned elsewhere in the organization, most probably Munich. The idea of going to Europe appealed to me, and I listened eagerly to what Sargeant had to say. At one point, greatly daring, I asked him where RL’s financial support came from. Averting his eyes, he told me that several foundations, who were interested in foreign affairs and American security policy, funded the operation, adding that probably none of the foundation names would be known to me. He mentioned a couple of the names, and he was right. I had never heard of them.

My day-to-day supervisor was to be Andre Yedigaroff, Sargeant’s executive assistant and right-hand man. Yedigaroff’s office was separated from Sargeant’s by a room occupied by two secretaries. Helen Wolf was a warm Romanian-Amer-

ican lady, and Adele Idestrom was a tall cool Swedish-American blonde. The first thing I spotted when I walked into Yedigaroff's office was a large table filled with carefully painted 19th century lead soldiers, Russian and French, in battle formation. I also noticed a leather cup-like container containing pencils with exceedingly sharp points. They were sharpened daily by Adele. Andre used to complain that they were sharpened so fine that the leads kept breaking. He suspected Adele of doing this on purpose to annoy him.

So it wasn't exactly a typical corporate office. Andre Yedigaroff was a dapper, well-dressed man in his late forties. He was of Georgian-Russian parentage, with a broad smile and a dark penetrating gaze. His father had been an officer in the Tsar's army. That first day he welcomed me to Radio Liberty, gave me some general guidelines (the serious talk would come later), and showed me to an office which I was to share with a man named Ed Chambers. Chambers was on his way out of the organization. I was with him only a few weeks before he left, and never discovered the real reasons for his departure, though there were some mutterings about a personal incident in Munich. He was clearly disgruntled, and told me a number of unflattering stories about my new colleagues, which made me just uncomfortable enough to wonder if I had made a mistake.

After Chambers left, I was moved into an office round the corner, just across from Andre Yedigaroff. My new office mate, Ben Peacock, was much more congenial. He advised me not to take Chambers seriously. Ben had originally been hired for the slot I was now in, but had decided not to take the job in Munich. He was recently divorced, and wanted to stay near his daughter in New York. It was Ben's decision to step down that had opened up the slot for me. Now I was stationed on the launching-pad to Europe. Outside working hours, Ben was a playwright. As a student at the University of Michigan, he had won a prize that had once been awarded to Arthur Miller. When I asked him what his play was about, he off-handedly said it was about "miscegenation." It wasn't a word I had heard before. I had to look it up.

"THE FACTS OF LIFE"

A few weeks later, I was still wondering what my new job really entailed. I had spent most of the time reviewing internal communications, such as the weekly Activities Reports that were sent from Munich to New York and vice versa, and writing a memo on how useful I thought they were. Then I was asked if I had any recommendations for improving them, no doubt to give me a better understand-

ing of the organization. Knowing as little as I did about Radio Liberty, I found them interesting, but Ben Peacock said they were viewed by the senior New York staff as obfuscation designed to hide the real facts. As I was to discover, a certain tension existed between New York and Munich. While I was mulling this over, Andre Yedigiaroff summoned me to his office for a talk about what one might call “the facts of life.”

Andre sat me down with my back to his toy soldier army, which appeared to be in full Napoleonic attack mode. Looking off into the distance, he began to relate how Radio Liberty had come into being in the early 1950s.¹ After the war, Ambassador George Kennan, then on the State Department Policy Planning staff, had had the idea of opening a channel for Soviet emigrés to communicate with their fellow citizens in the USSR. This notion had been taken up by the Office of Policy Coordination under OSS-veteran Frank Wisner. In 1950, Wisner’s office became part of the CIA, and the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism (AmComLib) was created the same year. The upshot was that Radio Liberation, as it was originally called, was founded in 1951 and went on the air in 1953, a few days before Stalin’s death.²

Having explained the historical trail, Yedigiaroff then informed me that the station was still funded by the CIA. Since I would be handling classified materials, I would have to sign a formal statement that I was aware of the CIA connection. I also had to sign a statement that I had not belonged to any group on a list of communist front organizations. He gave me the list and I didn’t recognize any of the names, so I went ahead and signed.

I was now one of a small group of radio insiders that was considered “witting.” The CIA connection was not to be divulged to anyone, said Andre, my wife excepted. I was given a cover name at CIA headquarters in Langley, though I didn’t know it at the time, and I never found out what it was. I already had some suspicions about CIA involvement, but this bald revelation left my mind spin-

1 Perhaps the best account of the founding of Radio Liberty, based on formerly classified CIA documents, is A. Ross Johnson’s *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 26–36. Other accounts can be found in Sig Mickelson, *America’s Other Voice: The Story of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (New York: Praeger, 1983); Lowell H. Schwartz, *Political Warfare Against the Kremlin...* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009); and Gene Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty: An Insider’s Memoir of Radio Liberty* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999).

2 Radio Liberation became Radio Liberty in May 1959, as American policy under Eisenhower shifted from the concept of “liberation” to that of “liberalization.” AmComLib became the Radio Liberty Committee (RLC) in 1964. For the sake of clarity I refer to Radio Liberty and the Radio Liberty Committee throughout.

ning. That evening I informed Lynne that I was now working *with*, though not *for*, the CIA. She took it in her stride. But for me it was a big step. My goal had always been a career in government. The Foreign Service was still at the back of my mind. I had considered the CIA while in graduate school, and had even interviewed with them, before deciding not to take the application further. I didn't want to live a clandestine, compartmentalized life where I wouldn't be able to share what I was doing with anyone, even my wife. But despite my scruples, here I was, on the CIA payroll, even if only indirectly.

Andre Yedigiaroff, it turned out, was a career CIA officer placed at the Radio to serve as liaison with Langley.³ One of my tasks working for him was to deal with materials flowing back and forth to the Agency in Washington, which was euphemistically referred to as the "Board of Trustees." Some of the material was sensitive, which was why I needed to be "witting," and why I required a Top Secret security clearance. There was a special vault, guarded by one of Andre's staff, a sprightly lady of German-Jewish origin named Lore Glenville, where I would go to read dispatches exchanged between New York and Washington. But the CIA was a benign overseer. They acted like a foundation passing on a grant. Like any foundation they wanted to know how the money was being spent but, as far as I could see, they played little part in the day-to-day operations of the station, and did not interfere openly in editorial decisions. The small amount of policy advice that I saw was essentially common sense, and struck me as more suggestive than directive.

A YEAR IN NEW YORK

During my year at New York headquarters, Howland Sargeant had me carrying out tasks that involved every department of the organization, and I gained an exhaustive knowledge of how RL functioned. One of the areas that interested me most was audience research. The task of the Audience Research Division in Munich (ARD) was to try to identify the audience in the USSR. Sargeant was constantly being pressed by the "Board of Trustees" for evidence of listening, and he took a keen interest in the activities of ARD.

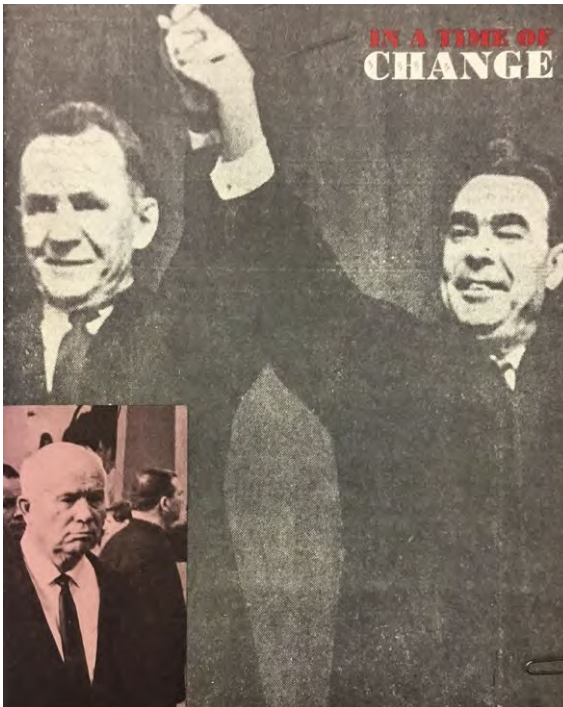
My office mate, Ben Peacock, dismissed ARD as "generating a lot of paper" without anyone being sure what it all added up to. It was true that nothing the

³ See Gene Sosin, "Sparks of Liberty," 95. Sosin, a former RL senior executive, gives an account of Yedigiaroff's status, his duties at Radio Liberty, and some colorful background on him.

department put out gave any indication of the size of the audience, but I found all the “paper” riveting. I was fascinated by the interviews with Soviets traveling abroad (some of them quite important), the translations of letters from listeners, and the details of attacks on Radio Liberty in Soviet media.

Each year the Radio Liberty Committee prepared an Annual Report of its activities. This was put together largely for public relations purposes, but the report went to the “Board of Trustees” and various offices in Washington. Ben and I were assigned the Annual Report for 1965. We called it *In A Time of Change*, and put together a snappy report with a cover that juxtaposed a bewildered Khrushchev looking off to the side (he had been deposed in October 1964) with a jubilant Brezhnev and a slightly less dour than usual Kosygin raising their joined hands in a victory pose. We were extremely proud of this clever touch. President Sargeant told us it was the best Annual Report RL had ever put out.

The Radio Liberty office was a polyglot mixture of the nationalities of the USSR. Everyone had a story to tell, and I listened eagerly to them all. While not yet living in history myself, I was surrounded by people who had. But I was forced to recognize that many of these tales were heartbreaking accounts of hardship, separation, and death. Boris Orshansky had been a captain in the Soviet Army



Cover of the “ground-breaking” Annual Report prepared with Ben Peacock in New York in 1964.

and fought his way through the war to Berlin. Vladimir Rudolph was a Red Army colonel who had defected in Germany after the war. The Tatar Garip Sultan had fought in the Red Army, been taken prisoner by the Germans, and stayed in the West after the war. I began to perceive that if “living in history” meant going through World War II and the DP camps, it was a lot less romantic than I had imagined. But I was convinced I was on the right path.

In November 1965, Radio Liberty and New York University held a joint conference to discuss how the topic of dissent was handled in RL programming. Dissent in the USSR would soon be propelled to the front of the scene after the notorious Sinyavsky-Daniel trial in February 1966.⁴ I assisted a veteran colleague, Gene Sosin, the director of Program Planning, with setting up the conference, in coordination with Prof. George Gordon of NYU. The conference brought together experts such as Daniel Lerner, William Griffith, and Ithiel de Sola Pool of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); Richard Pipes of Harvard University; Colette Shulman and Marshal Shulman of Columbia University; Richard Rowson and Vladimir Treml of Duke University; and Michel Tatu of *Le Monde*, a leading Parisian daily. Tatu had just returned from several years living in Moscow and was at Columbia University writing a book on his experiences. Zbigniew Brzezinski, then of Columbia, gave the dinner address, and Ithiel de Sola Pool the keynote talk.⁵ This was heady company for a young RL staffer, and I made some useful contacts. Both Lerner and Pool would be key consultants later when I was working for Audience Research in Munich.

As regards RL programming, the conferees confirmed that RL was by and large on the right path. They stressed that the Radio should encourage its listeners to see things differently from the official Soviet Party line. The tone of the programming should be positive rather than negative, and neither provocative nor patronizing. RL should not necessarily mirror official US opinion, but take, where justified, positions that differed from the US government. It should avoid cultivating an all-American image that would damage its credibility with the Soviet listener. It should be scrupulously objective in its news reporting. The

4 Yuli Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky, who had both published in the West under pseudonyms, were sentenced to five and seven years respectively in labor camps. The trial signalled the end of the Khrushchev-era “thaw” and the beginning of Brezhnevite repression.

5 In his book *Sparks of Liberty*, Gene Sosin stated that I supplied Pool with 2,000 interviews with Soviet travelers as background for his talk, but this did not happen until 1972. Pool’s talk was based on his work in international communications research, and he emphasized the importance of foreign broadcasting to closed societies such as the USSR.

“guest in the living room” image that the station tried to project—that is, a Soviet or ex-Soviet person who had benefited from living experience abroad, talking to other Soviets, as evoked in Kennan’s original vision—was the right one. RL should aim to attract the intelligentsia, both scientific and creative, as its primary audience.⁶ I had the task of assembling the final transcript of the sessions.

MOVING TO MUNICH

With my impending transfer to Munich on the horizon, I had begun to study German. I worked through several grammar books on my own and practiced German conversation with a native speaker. Siegbert Kling had come to the US in 1957 on a program for persons displaced by the war, and my parents, while not his official sponsors, took him in for several months during his first year. Sieg had been born in East Prussia in 1938, and escaped to West Germany with his mother, brother, and sister at the end of the war, when the Red Army moved into their homeland. In 1965, he was in New York working for an advertising agency. In the fall of that year he was transferred to Munich by his New York employer.

Sieg was at the airport to greet us when our family of three arrived in Munich at 2 a.m. on January 6, 1966, after a long transatlantic flight via Frankfurt. Also present was Bob Redlich, the Information Advisor to Walter K. Scott, the Radio’s Executive Director. My slot was in Redlich’s office, though I would be working mainly for Ken Scott.

Redlich dropped us off at the Haus Savoy, a residential hotel in the Schwabing district, telling me to take the next day off and get settled. We were all exhausted. Next morning Lynne and Rolf stayed at home, but I set out to explore our new neighborhood. I was captivated at once. Munich had been heavily bombed in the war, and the architecture was a mix of modern postwar buildings and older houses that had been restored, or survived the bombing. I had never been to Europe before, but I felt at home right away.

After walking the snow-covered streets for an hour or so, I headed for my new office. Redlich was taken aback to see me show up so soon. In the days before I left New York, more than one staffer had told me to reassure the programmers in Munich that the “New York folks weren’t that bad.” RL’s offices were located in the former air terminal at Oberwiesenfeld, on the outskirts of Munich. This was the airport that British Prime Minister Chamberlain had flown into in 1938 for

6 See Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty*, 121–122, for more on the conclusions of this conference.

his negotiations with Hitler. Now there were sheep grazing on the runway where Hitler had met Chamberlain when he got off his plane. My office was in the old control tower. It was unheated and in the wintry January weather we had to rely on space heaters to keep warm. On cold days we kept our coats on, though we had to take off our gloves to type. The main terminal building had heat, and I tried to spend as much time as possible out of my office. Oberwiesenfeld served as RL headquarters until 1967. Not long afterwards, it was razed to accommodate the 1972 Munich Olympics.

My office mate was a Cossack from the Kuban in southern Russia. Grigory Ivanovich Tapesko had no English and his German was shaky, although he had lived in Germany for more than twenty years, so we spoke only Russian together. He had fought in five different armies, all of which had lost their battles—at least while he was with them. In World War I he was drafted into the Tsarist army. When the army mutinied in 1917, he went home to southern Russia, near Stavropol. The White Army came through and conscripted him. The Whites were defeated by the Reds, who conscripted him in turn. Eventually he left the Reds and simply went home. During the 1920s and 1930s, he worked as a journalist. At the beginning of World War II he was drafted into the Red Army, and taken prisoner by the Germans. In the POW camp, he joined the Vlasov Army, made up of Russian prisoners of war in German POW camps. The commander was a former Red Army general, Andrei Vlasov. The original purpose of the Vlasov Army was to help the Germans “liberate” the Soviet Union, but its members did not see direct action on the Eastern front since Hitler didn’t trust an army made up of what he considered *Untermenschen*.

When the war ended, Grigory Ivanovich was in a hospital in Salzburg with tuberculosis. Under the terms of an agreement with the Allies, Russian POWs were to be repatriated to the USSR. On arrival they were sent to the Gulag, since they were considered traitors for having been captured. Grigory Ivanovich escaped repatriation thanks to an Austrian nurse who hid him in a nearby wood. They later married. She never learned Russian, and his German was rudimentary, but somehow they managed.

Grigory Ivanovich had been the editor of a newspaper sponsored by the Radio Liberty Committee for Russian-speaking refugees in Europe called *Наше общее дело* (*Our Common Cause*). The newspaper had been closed a year earlier for budgetary reasons, and Tapesko was now working for Redlich’s Information Office. His main project was putting together a series of small cultural magazines whose content was based on RL broadcasts. I helped choose the themes, he edited the



Grigory Tapesenko, my office mate in the control tower at Oberwiesenfeld, Munich.

transcripts, and the result was printed up in nice-looking little magazines intended for distribution in the USSR.

One afternoon around Christmas, Grigory Ivanovich and his wife invited us over for a drink. We planned to stay for an hour or so, but we stayed for seven! The food and drink kept on coming, and a parade of visitors trooped in and out. Lynne didn't speak Russian and her German was not yet fluent, but she held up amazingly well. One of the visitors was Colonel Konstantin Kromiadi, who had been chief of staff to Gen. Vlasov. He recounted in a quivering voice how Vlasov had been handed back to the Soviets, and there were tears in his eyes. Vlasov was executed in 1946 by the Soviets for treason. I never found out how Kromiadi escaped the same fate.⁷

⁷ It was recently brought to my attention by John Puckett, who proofread this book for CEU Press, that Kromiadi had been wounded in the leg in the final days of WWII, and when Vlasov's staff relocated to Füssen in southern Germany, Kromiadi was placed in a private dwelling to convalesce. A few days later, Vlasov and his staff decided to head off in the direction of southern Bohemia, leaving Kromiadi behind, since he was still recuperating. When the American forces handed over Vlasov to the Soviets, along with elements of the Vlasov army, Kromiadi was still living among primarily civilian DPs in the Füssen area, and so escaped this fate.

FAMILY LIFE IN A NEW COUNTRY

My contract with the Radio included housing. When we got to Munich, our housing advisor said she had found just the place for us, but it wouldn't be ready for a couple of months. So we stayed on at the Savoy. We changed the lightbulbs so we could read, and ate in the ground-floor restaurant, where the German diners were very taken with baby Rolf.

Our new apartment was on Rumanstrasse in the northern part of Schwabing. When we went to visit it, we were amazed at its size. It was beyond anything we could have imagined. In Washington, we had lived in a small studio, and in New York we had a small walk-up on East 97th Street near Spanish Harlem. This apartment had a large living and dining room, three bedrooms (one became my office), kitchen, bathroom, and separate WC. We took it right away—before the housing department could change their minds!

Our neighbors in the apartment building were mostly German, with the exception of a Turkish family, the Baysalmans, who lived right above us. They had a son a year older than Rolf, and we became good friends. We visited them in Istanbul when they returned to Turkey. The neighbors directly below us, the Söldners, had a daughter, Andrea, who was Rolf's age, and a son Hans-Walter, a year or two older. Andrea eventually became Rolf's regular playmate, and used to visit our apartment almost daily. Lynne learned a lot of her German from the little girl, and said jokingly that that was why her German tended to sound like baby talk. We had heard that Germans were not especially friendly, but all our neighbors made us feel welcome.

The next step was to buy a car. Someone had recommended Peugeot. I went to the dealers with my friend Sieg, and we settled straightaway on a new Peugeot 404. Then we went to the Deutsche Bank and set up a loan. I couldn't believe that it was all so easy. (No doubt it helped that I had a steady salary in dollars.) The car gave us the freedom to explore Upper Bavaria and the nearby Alps, and we did so every weekend. We had never seen anything like the Bavarian countryside, with its tiny villages, verdant fields and forests, and charmingly decorated houses. It was like being in Disneyland. It was hard to reconcile what we were seeing with the images of brown-shirted Nazis marching through the streets in the newsreels that we had grown up on.

Casting our net a little further afield, we went to Venice, and then Yugoslavia. Given my line of business, I thought I ought to go to a communist country, and Yugoslavia was the only one we were allowed to visit. The Warsaw Pact countries

were off-limits to Radio employees. Yugoslavia didn't fit the image of what we thought a communist country would look like. It all seemed normal, not downtrodden, and the people were friendly. After visiting Belgrade and driving through the back country over unbelievably bad roads, we spent a couple of days at the seaside resort of Budva, a picturesque stone village whose outer walls had been built by the Venetians. Unfortunately I caught a cold swimming in the sea, and when we got back to Munich, I was in such bad shape that I called in sick to the office and stayed in bed.

Meanwhile, Lynne took Rolf downstairs to do laundry. Suddenly I heard a scream. I ran out in my bathrobe. On the stairs a woman was screaming and pointing at the elevator two floors below. The glass door of the elevator was broken. Lynne was inside the elevator holding Rolf. He had been playing with a ball in the back of the elevator and when it bounced forward he reached for it. Even though it was a new building, the elevator didn't have a safety door. His hand and forearm slipped into the space between the floor and the door while the elevator was moving. His forearm was crushed. Blood was everywhere. I shouted "Ambulanz!" The dentist from the office downstairs called the police. Lynne said Rolf had a broken arm but would be all right. It didn't seem that way to me. His eyes were white from loss of blood. I threw on some clothes. A police car met us downstairs and took us to the Schwabinger Krankenhaus nearby. Rolf was wheeled into the emergency room. One of the policemen offered me a cigarette. I had stopped smoking a few months earlier, but I took it gladly. Lynne was in shock and unnaturally calm, but I was scared stiff.

We spent what seemed an eternity in the waiting area. After a couple of hours, a tall middle-aged doctor came out and introduced himself as Dr. Singer. He assured us that Rolf would be all right, though he had lost a lot of blood. I asked in my imperfect German, "*Der Arm bleibt?*" (Is the arm still there?) Dr. Singer replied, "*Wissen Sie, es war sehr schwer, aber der Arm bleibt.*" (You know, it was very difficult, but the arm is there.) But it was a near thing. If the dentist hadn't called the police so fast, if the police had been slow in coming, if the hospital had been more than a few minutes away ...

Rolf remained in hospital for the next three months. During that time our second son, Marcus (known as Max), was born on August 31, two weeks late. We have a picture of Rolf and Max's first meeting in the car outside the hospital in mid-October. Both have puzzled looks on their faces. Max was too young to know what was happening, but I sometimes wonder if Rolf thought we had found another little boy to take his place while he was in the hospital. Over the

next several years, Rolf spent a lot of time undergoing reconstructive surgery at the Columbia University Medical Center in New York where Lynne had been a student and where he was born. It was only partially successful, and he has limited use of the arm to this day which hasn't stopped him from a career in humanitarian work and as a World Bank consultant.

NEW QUARTERS ON ARABELLASTRASSE

In 1967 Radio Liberty moved into modern purpose-built headquarters on Arabellastrasse in the Bogenhausen section of Munich, and my days in the unheated airport control tower were over. The new building was luxurious in comparison to the old quarters, and I had an office all to myself. Most of the time I worked on special assignments from the Executive Director. Ken Scott was a former high-ranking Foreign Service officer who at one point had served as Director of Administration for the Foreign Service. When he was hired by Radio Liberty, he had been serving in Lagos, Nigeria, at the US Embassy.

One of my early assignments was to carry out a content analysis of one week's Russian-language programming from RL, VOA, and BBC, with a view to determining the focus of each station's programming. I defined categories such as domestic news, international news, USSR news, and cultural programming. RL's programming showed a clear focus on coverage of the USSR in the areas of news, analysis, and culture. A debate was raging at that time in Washington concerning overlap in the broadcasts of RL and VOA, and I was able to show that RL's programming was in no sense a rerun of VOA's and vice-versa. As its mission demanded, VOA had a clear focus on US policy positions and Americana. The BBC presented a distinctively British point of view, focusing more on the USSR than VOA, but less than RL.

My next project was a report on new hires in the non-Russian services. RL broadcast to the Soviet Union in a total of seventeen languages, corresponding to each of the Soviet Socialist Republics, which meant it was addressing the peoples of Central Asia, the Caucasus, Ukraine, Belorussia, and Moldavia, as well as those of Russia, in their own tongues. This set off RL from the other Western broadcasters, which offered very few broadcasts in non-Russian languages. Most of this work was conducted in the security office, going through work applications and hiring forms. After I submitted the report to management, Don Dudley, the chief security officer, called me into his office. He commended me on the report, but noted that I hadn't put my name on it: "I know you put in a lot of

hours in our security vault compiling this report,” he said. “But you didn’t put your name on it, and now nobody knows who wrote it, and probably someone else will take credit for it.”

This had not occurred to me. I had written the report at the request of Ken Scott and, since he would obviously know who the author was, it didn’t seem necessary to put my name on it. Midwestern humility? It was a useful lesson in how bureaucracy works. I took Dudley’s admonition seriously, and from then on always put my name on work I had done. When I took over the Audience Research office in Paris, I made sure that everyone put their name on reports they had written so credit could be given where it was due.

One of my duties was to accompany the Emigré Relations Director, Will Klump, to Soviet emigré functions in Munich. If Klump was away, people would know who I was, and I could function as a stand-in. It usually involved nothing more singular than attending the funeral of, say, a Ukrainian who belonged to an emigré organization that the radio considered important. Much more exotic was Kurban Bayram,⁸ which brought together many of the local Muslim organizations at a large Munich beer hall. Will and I were treated as honored guests. We sat at a prominent table, and the attendees came by to greet us, beer stein in hand. Munich’s Muslim community, which was essentially Turkish, was not abstemious. From time to time, Will would eye one of the guests, put his hand over his mouth and whisper mischievously, “That guy was one of the biggest Nazi collaborators...”⁹

The Institute for the Study of the USSR, located in downtown Munich, functioned independently of the Radio, but it was sponsored and funded by the Radio Liberty Committee. The Institute was a research center on Soviet affairs staffed by Soviet emigré scholars, who were joined from time to time by visiting Western academics. It ran a summer school in conjunction with the University of Oklahoma that was designed for Western, mainly American, university students working in the area of Soviet affairs. Its publications included an important biographical tome, *Who’s Who in the USSR*, as well as texts in languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, Arabic, and Turkish, which were distributed in developing countries as a means of raising awareness of Soviet activities in coun-

8 The festival of Abraham and Isaac, known as Eid al-Adha in the Arab world, a major event for Munich’s Muslim community.

9 A number of Soviet Muslims had collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. Some had been captured by the Germans, and others offered their services voluntarily, in the hope that Germany would grant them independence from the USSR.

tries where pro-Soviet propaganda was widespread. As a graduate student at SAIS, I had read some of its publications and found them useful. Back then I knew more about the Institute than I did about Radio Liberty. The Institute also held frequent conferences with high-profile participants that added an extra dimension to Munich life and radio routine.

In 1967, it organized a conference on the war in Vietnam, and Ken Scott asked me to help with coordination. The day-to-day running of the Institute was handled by an American named Ed Crowley, and the academic side was headed by a Russian-émigré specialist on Soviet medicine, Dr. Schultz. The conference brought together Western scholars and Institute staff for two days of meetings. One of the more flamboyant participants was the American writer and psychologist, Oliver Sacks, who arrived fresh from Vietnam with his own analyst in tow. Participants at the conference included both doves and hawks, and the organizers were nervous in case the proceedings concluded on a negative note, but this didn't happen. (After the Tet offensive of 1968, things might have been different.) Even Sacks ended his talk on a mildly positive note, despite his misgivings about the war. Keeping my own reservations to myself, I mingled with the eminent scholars on an equal footing. Sadly, the Institute was closed in 1972, during a period of political and budgetary crisis and retrenchment at the Radio Liberty Committee.

By 1968, after two years in Munich, I was becoming restless. The war in Vietnam was entering a new phase. US involvement was increasing, as Roger Hilsman had predicted. I felt mildly guilty that I was enjoying a comfortable life in Europe while members of my extended family, as well as college friends, were under fire in Southeast Asia. That summer Lynne and I decided to take home leave, even though it would mean staying at Radio Liberty for another year under the terms of my contract. But we found America going up in flames, thanks to the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy and the anti-war demonstrations. I was secretly relieved to be returning to the relative peace of Munich, where there was nothing worse than German student demonstrations.

We had made the Atlantic crossing by ship, and on the way back to Munich I spent a few days alone in Lisbon. Lynne had stayed in New York with Rolf, who was undergoing reconstructive surgery at Columbia University Medical Center. I concentrated on seeing the sights, and paid no attention to the news. I got a rude awakening when a cab driver, on learning that I lived in Germany, got very excited and said, "It's terrible what's happened! Germany has invaded Czechoslo-

vakia!” It sounded preposterous. I asked him what he meant. “Yes, Germany and Poland and Hungary and Russia have all invaded Czechoslovakia!” So he must mean East Germany! I jumped out of the cab and grabbed an English-language newspaper. He was right: the Warsaw Pact had invaded Czechoslovakia. I called my office, and took the next flight back.

For the next few months, the invasion gave me a renewed sense of purpose. The decision to stay or go was resolved in the spring of 1969. I was offered two jobs. One was an administrative position with the Russian Service that I didn’t feel especially qualified for, and the other was field work with Audience Research. Moving to Munich had allowed me to keep up with the Audience Research Division more closely than I had done in New York, and the work continued to interest me, but there were no openings. Suddenly the situation changed. One of the staffers, Orest Neimanis, decided to leave, and the director of ARD approached me to replace him. I had met Max Ralis briefly when I arrived in Munich. After a long interview, during which Max tested my Russian language ability by having me describe a jungle picture on his office wall, we decided that there was a future for me in the Audience Research Division, and I joined the staff in May 1969. Before he left, Neimanis came to see me. His criticisms of Max made it clear that they had not parted on the best of terms. I never found out what had happened.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH: THE EARLY YEARS

In its early years, Radio Liberty did not have an audience research department *per se*. What passed for audience research was conducted under the auspices of the Information Department by James Critchlow, one of the Radio’s first staffers. I met Jim when he came to New York from Paris in 1965 to take over Public Affairs at RL. He took me to lunch at Janssens, a German restaurant near the office, and told me about living in Europe. It was clear that he really loved Paris and the lifestyle there. When I asked him why he had left, he told me that if he stayed any longer in Paris he would probably have ended up “sleeping under the bridges.”

Back in the 1950s, Critchlow and his staff did a lot of different things, and audience research was only one of them. Their efforts in this area were limited to soliciting listener mail, mainly through mailboxes in Berlin, and tracking attacks on RL in the Soviet press.

Mail was sparse in the early years. The first communication bearing a Soviet postmark to reach the station was a postcard from Brest on the Polish-Soviet

border addressing an RL satirical broadcaster—"Greetings to Ivan Ivanovich Oktyabrev"—and bearing two signatures. This was in 1954, more than a year after RL went on the air. Critchlow surmised that the letter had been sent by two soldiers on their way to the Soviet garrison in Berlin. Press attacks were also few and far between. At that period the station was not deemed to be a major threat and, as Critchlow observed, "the Soviets were too cagey to give us free publicity in their own media."¹⁰

Pickings were slim. Meanwhile Howland Sargeant had to prove that people in the USSR actually listened to Radio Liberty. Regardless of the fact that access to the Soviet Union was severely limited, Sargeant set his sights on a full-fledged audience research operation. In 1956, three years after RL began broadcasting, he met Max Ralis, who had been doing field research in India for Cornell University, and hired him to set up an audience research department in Munich.

Max was the perfect candidate to take on this impossible job. He had been born in Moscow in 1916. His parents were Mensheviks who left Russia after the Revolution.¹¹ Max grew up in Berlin in the 1920s, emigrated to France in the 1930s when the Nazis came to power, and got involved in anti-Fascist activities there. Before the outbreak of war he was drafted into the French Army, and was wounded in a motorcycle accident in Alsace, which turned out to be a stroke of luck. When France fell in May 1940, he was in a hospital in Bordeaux, far away from the fighting. He and his family made their way across the Pyrenees to Spain and on to Lisbon, where they eventually managed to get on a boat to the US. Several years later, he returned to Europe with the American army to debrief German POWs. He was involved with several major sociological studies of the post-war scene in Europe, including the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project, which interviewed Soviets marooned in Europe after World War II. He also found time to get a PhD in Sociology from the University of Cologne.¹²

10 See James Critchlow, *Radio Hole-In-The-Head: Radio Liberty: An Insider's Story of Cold War Broadcasting* (Washington, DC: American University Press, 2006), 100, for more details of early audience research activities.

11 The Mensheviks, although more numerous than the Bolsheviks, somehow took the name of a minority faction in the Russian Socialist movement. They had more moderate views than the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, who ultimately took over the Revolution. Their orientation was more social-democratic than communist.

12 A more extensive account of Max's biography and his contribution to audience research and Radio Liberty can be found in the obituary I wrote after his death in 1999 for *Inside RFE/RL*, the RFE/RL house organ. An abridged text of this obituary appears in Appendix 2.



Max Ralis, founder of Audience Research at Radio Liberty, newly arrived in Munich.

Max moved to Munich in 1956, and set about locating office space and hiring a staff. The office he found was on Leopoldstrasse in Schwabing, well away from the main RL headquarters at Oberwiesenfeld. He wanted the new Audience Research Division to be physically separate from broadcasting operations, and as autonomous as possible. The building was set back from Leopoldstrasse in a garden area, where a brass sign directed at another building read “My Spies.” The meaning of this was unclear but it became the source of many jokes, especially as Ralis’ operation was viewed as distinctly murky by the skeptical ex-Soviet journalists at RL. Confronted with the near-impossible task of trying to evaluate an audience that couldn’t be engaged on its own turf, Max evolved a number of ingenious methods to get a handle on Radio Liberty’s listeners. As Critchlow notes in his book, in the early days his colleagues at RL had a difficult time understanding what he was up to. Max’s own often Byzantine manner didn’t help.

Gradually Ralis put together a staff that ultimately numbered about a dozen employees. One of his first hires was his deputy David Anin, a historian who had worked on the Columbia University Encyclopedia of the USSR. Born David Azarchs in Daugavpils, Latvia, in 1909, David was a native speaker of Russian. Orest Neimanis, an American citizen of Latvian-Russian descent, whose father ran a Russian-language publishing house and bookstore in Munich, was in charge of field operations, such as they were at the time. In 1963, Anthony Williams came on board as chief translator. Tony had learned Russian in the British Army and was a gifted linguist. In 1965, George Perry, a reserve US Foreign Service offi-

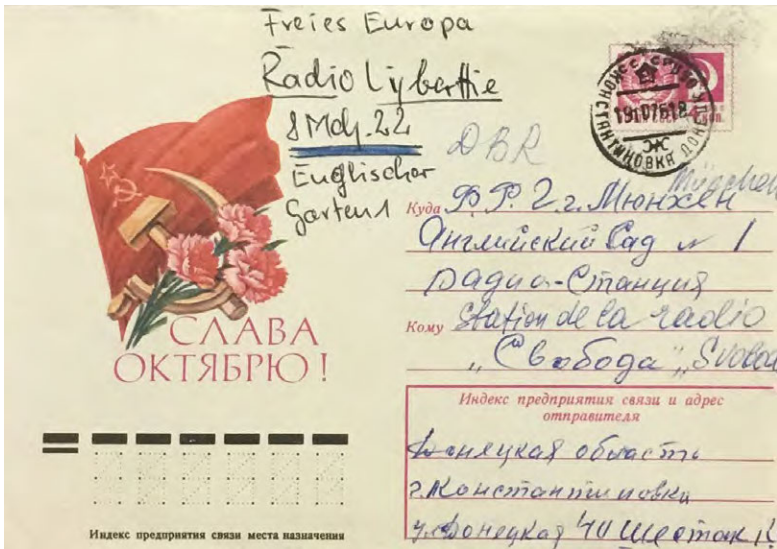
cer, who had worked on USIA exhibits that toured the Soviet Union, was hired as planning officer. Perry had been born Jerzy Peretjatkowicz in Krakow in 1927. He was a suave man about town who had his suits tailor-made in Hong Kong. He once mentioned that he had had a difficult childhood because of the war, but in general he didn't talk about his past. Mary Reiss, an American from Chicago married to a German, was a capable reports editor.

SOLICITING MAIL FROM LISTENERS

To begin with, ARD continued to solicit listener mail and track media attacks much as James Crichtlow had done. In the 1950s and 1960s, listener mail was the most direct method of making contact with Soviet radio listeners. Every item of correspondence was mined for three types of information. The first was substantive content such as expressions of political affiliation, reactions to domestic and international events, programming suggestions, and praise or criticism of RL programming. The second was technical information such as quality of reception, jamming in specific areas, and individual listening habits, all of which enabled RL to improve transmission facilities and adjust program schedules.¹³ The third was personal information on the listeners: gender, ethnicity, education level, etc. All this information helped to put together a general but very incomplete picture of the audience.

Since it was rare for any broadcaster to receive spontaneous, unsolicited mail, various methods of soliciting mail from the listeners were employed. One was the use of "mailboxes": short spots at the end of a program, encouraging listeners to respond to what they had heard, and giving an accommodation address in the West to which they could write. Listeners were never urged to write directly to the station. Another approach was to air a special program replying to listeners' mail. Besides reassuring potential letter writers that mail could get through, and would be acknowledged if it did, it was hoped that it might encourage listeners to enter into a dialogue with the station. The third technique for drumming up mail was by offering "giveaways" (free books or records). All the listener had to do was send a postcard, not to RL itself, but to an intermediary organization or bona fide bookstore. Examples of giveaways were a John F. Kennedy memorial book,

13 An ARD Memo on *World Radio and TV Handbook* responses, dated 1967, notes that it was possible to establish that the newly-built southern base transmitters in Spain were considerably more effective than those in Lampertheim, Germany. (RFE/RL Corporate Records in the Hoover Institution Archives. This will be designated as HIA henceforth).



The envelope of a letter sent to Radio Liberty in Munich from Donetsk Oblast, USSR. It was relatively unusual for a letter to be addressed to Radio Liberty rather than to one of its “accommodation addresses.”

Beatles record albums, Bulgakov’s novel *The Master and Margarita*, the *World Radio and TV Handbook*, books on modern art, recordings of Orthodox Church Services, and Ukrainian folk songs. Even though these postcard requests provided no substantive information, they were indicators of geographic location, approximate listening date, and listener gender.¹⁴ The “giveaways” were carefully selected to avoid rejection by the screening authorities, and every effort was made to ensure that the writer’s security was not jeopardized.

The first concerted attempt to solicit listener mail—by offering giveaways and broadcasting mailbox appeals—started in 1962. The amount of mail Radio Liberty received shot up as a result. 1964 was a peak year in which the station received 1097 pieces of mail. The number of letters sent that had failed to arrive was probably much higher. Soviet mail interception techniques were very well honed, as was confirmed in 1969, when a systematic mail test was conducted. Thirty letters and postcards were mailed at the rate of two a day between April 20 and June 4 from different post-boxes in Moscow. They were addressed to two RL accommodation addresses in London, an Auto Club and a Music Club. All were in Russian and contained merely thank-you notes for the giveaways, or for a program heard,

¹⁴ ARD Memo on Listener Mail, April 1968, HIA.

or else acknowledging receipt of an automobile journal. Of the 30 items posted in the test only 4 arrived.¹⁵ This suggests that only about one in ten mail items sent to Radio Liberty accommodation addresses ever reached its destination.

Occasionally non-postal methods of communication were used, including, amazingly, the traditional message in a bottle. In 1970, RL received a message from a Soviet fisherman who had literally put a letter into a bottle and dropped it into the Baltic Sea. Eventually the bottle was found by a Swedish pensioner. Seeing the letter was written in Russian, he passed it on to a Russian friend. The friend made photocopies of the message and sent them to RL and the BBC. The letter contained some ideas which the fisherman wanted Western stations to broadcast. It condemned the Soviet system and its totalitarian aspects, and of course it confirmed the essential role played by Radio Liberty and other Western radios.¹⁶

Every time a letter containing substantive information arrived, it was translated into English with a brief cover analysis and distributed as a Listener Mail Report. The more interesting letters were used as the basis for on-air commentary or discussion in a program called “Meetings with Listeners.”

Sometimes a letter-writer would refer to a broadcaster by name and send personal greetings, as well as appreciation of the station’s attitude to Russia. Here’s an example from 1965:

First of all, I should like to congratulate [RL staffer] Galina Ruchyeva on the birth of her son. I wish you all a happy May Day holiday and want to express my satisfaction with the fact that, although you live abroad and have a different way of thinking than us, you still have, as before, a warm and sincere love for your homeland, our common mother Russia. I listen to you and consider that there is nothing wrong in this, for only in argument is the truth born. (LMR #144-65, from Zaporozhye, Ukrainian SSR)

Incoming listener mail addressed to RL accommodation addresses began to decline gradually after the peak year of 1964. BBC and VOA both noted a similar trend. Soviet mail interception techniques had apparently improved. The drop in listener mail encouraged Audience Research to increase the number of interviews with Soviet travelers abroad.

15 George Perry, Memo for the Record, “Mail Test,” 8 October 1969, HIA.

16 Letter from Max Ralis to Howland Sergeant, 14 January 1970, HIA.

OCCASIONAL AD HOC INTERVIEWS WITH SOVIET TRAVELERS

One of Max Ralis' innovations was to introduce ad hoc interviewing of Soviet travelers to the West. This was a procedure already being used by the audience research department of Radio Free Europe, and it yielded a lot of helpful information. It was confirmed that RL definitely had an audience, especially among the intelligentsia. No inferences as to audience size could be drawn from the data they provided, but they made for fascinating reading. I recall in particular a riveting interview with the Soviet pianist Emil Gilels when he was visiting Rome.

In the 1960s, contacting Soviet travelers was not easy. Foreign travel was severely restricted. Most Soviets traveled in groups, and tourist groups abroad were under constant surveillance. Contacts with foreigners were discouraged, and tourists were nervous of being denounced to the authorities by other members of their group. Large-scale interviewing was impossible, and interviews were conducted as and when the opportunity arose. ARD interviewers were Russian-speakers who came into contact for professional reasons with members of Soviet cultural organizations or other privileged citizens who were allowed to travel abroad. At its peak in the late 1960s, ARD probably had some twenty interviewers, all part-time. The main interview sites were Paris, Rome, London, and Athens. The interviews took the form of an informal discussion. The interviewers did not use a questionnaire, but focused on basic journalistic questions such as, Who, What, When, Where, and Why.

In Rome, a key interviewer was Irina Ilovaiskaya Alberti (see vignette in Appendix 2). Born to Russian emigrés in Yugoslavia, she was the wife of an Italian diplomat, which allowed her occasional access to Soviet travelers. In the early 1970s she proved invaluable when we began interviewing Jewish emigrants from the USSR. Later she spent three years in Vermont as assistant to Alexander Solzhenitsyn during his US exile, before moving to Paris in the 1980s and becoming editor of the Russian-language newspaper *Russkaya Mysl'*. She relates her life's trajectory in a fascinating memoir called *L'Exil et la Solitude*.¹⁷

ARD's man in Athens was Christopher Geleklidis, an ethnic Greek who had grown up in Ukraine. Geleklidis was a bear of a man with a booming voice and a steely gaze. He was virtually deaf in his left ear, and communicated at half a dozen decibel levels starting with loud. His in-house nickname was Zorba. His father had perished in the Stalinist purges, and he had managed to return to

17 Irina Alberti and Robert Masson, *L'Exil et la Solitude* (Paris: Editions Mame, 1993).

Greece after the war. He ran a translation office in the port of Piraeus, and was well placed to make contact with Soviet tourists passing through. A considerable number of Soviet travelers arrived in Greece on both commercial and tourist ships via the Black Sea. Soviet citizens came to visit family members who had settled in Greece, and a sizeable number of Soviet Greeks left the USSR in the 1960s and 1970s. Zorba knew everyone in Piraeus and his translation office was much in demand (see vignette in Appendix 2).

In Paris, Malesky-Malevich, an elderly Russian emigré who claimed to be related to the Soviet avant-garde painter Kazimir Malevich, frequently came into contact with members of the Soviet cultural intelligentsia visiting France. The information he gleaned from them confirmed that Western broadcasts and Radio Liberty were popular with intellectuals.

Also in Paris was Anne-Danièle Merlero, who for many years was one of the most productive of our interviewers. She was of French-Spanish extraction, but had been raised in Soviet Armenia. Her family had moved to France after the Spanish Civil War, and then, succumbing to Soviet promises of a good life for Western communists, relocated to the USSR after the war. Unfortunately Stalin's promises were unfounded. After a long struggle to leave the USSR, she settled in France. Working as a guide for Soviet groups traveling in France, she had easy access to potential interviewees.

As for those interviewed, they included Soviet travelers, plus the occasional defector, as well as ethnic Greeks, Spaniards, Germans, and other non-Soviet nationalities who had been repatriated from the USSR. ARD also talked to Russian-speaking Westerners returning from visits to the USSR. A post-graduate student who had spent time in Moscow reported discussing Western radio with about fifty of his Soviet acquaintances, of whom thirty said they listened to Radio Liberty.¹⁸ The medical sociologist Dr. Mark Field (with whom I had studied at Harvard in the summer of 1961) managed to bring up the subject of foreign radio listening with about a dozen contacts, several of whom were familiar with RL, in the course of a trip to the USSR to study Soviet public health services.

ARD's first large-scale interviewing effort took place in 1958 at the World's Fair in Brussels. Max organized a team of about 30 Russian-speaking interviewers who spread out at the Fair, managed to approach about 600 of the 6,000-7,000 Soviet visitors, and succeeded in exchanging at least a few words with about 300 Soviet citizens. Of these, 138 mentioned listening to Western radio. Ninety-one

18 Internal RL memo from ARD, "Measuring Radio Liberty's Effectiveness," 16 May 1967, HIA.

listened, at least occasionally, to BBC, 89 to Voice of America, and 65 to RL. In an internal memo, the BBC recognized that this interviewing was done without any specific bias toward RL and applauded the results.¹⁹

This team interviewing effort was followed up in 1959 at the Vienna World Youth Festival and in 1962 at the Helsinki World Youth Festival. Significant Soviet youth delegations attended both festivals, and the interviews provided considerable evidence of Western radio listening. Unfortunately, ARD's activities also caught the attention of the Soviet authorities. Max and his interviewers were denounced as "CIA provocateurs" by *Izvestia* and the literary journal *Druzhba narodov* (*Friendship of the Peoples*).²⁰ During the 1960s, ARD interviewing teams covered sporting events such as the Olympic Games in Rome (1960) and Tokyo (1964), the Winter Olympics in Innsbruck (1964), the World Cup Championship Games in England (1966), the Ice Hockey World Championship Games in Vienna (1967), as well as the Montreal World's Fair in 1967.

In 1967, ARD issued 319 reports documenting individual interviews with Soviet travelers.²¹ In 1968, under pressure from the "Board of Trustees" to provide additional evidence of RL's audience, Howland Sargeant expressed the hope that the number of interviews with travelers could be increased to 500 annually. Ralis countered that 400 would be a more realistic number, given financial constraints and interviewer resources.

The pressure was on to increase both traveler interviewers and listener mail responses, but the fact was that neither of these avenues of approach was capable of yielding an estimate of the actual size of Western radio audiences in the USSR. That would have to wait another few years.

SOVIET MEDIA ATTACKS ON RADIO LIBERTY

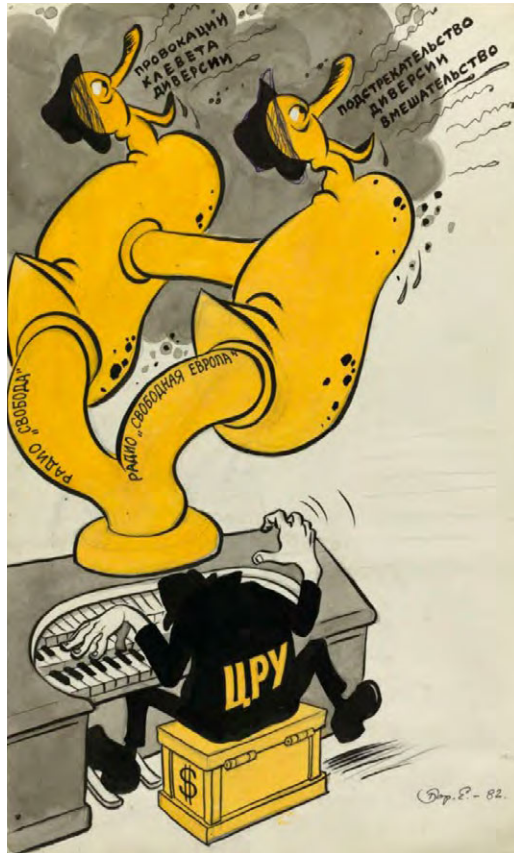
Meanwhile, it was clear that listening to Radio Liberty had become sufficiently widespread to pose a threat to the regime's monopoly of information. In the 1950s, official reactions to RL's broadcasts were few. The general feeling was that the Soviet authorities did not want to publicize Radio Liberty, and mainly chose to ignore it. The first attack in the Soviet press that mentioned RL appeared in

19 BBC Internal Memorandum, "Listening to Foreign Broadcasts in the USSR," undated, HIA. This memo was based on a 35-page report put out by ARD. The original report could not be located in the Hoover Institution Archives.

20 Critchlow, *Radio Hole-In-The-Head*, 106–107.

21 Confidential letter from Ralis to Sargeant, 16 January 1968, HIA.

Cartoon attacking RL in Soviet humor magazine *Krokodil*. Note the CIA agent, sitting on a pile of dollars, orchestrating the RFE duck and the RL duck quacking out “provocation” and “[political] diversion.”



April 1955 in *Izvestiya*: “Radio Liberation is an organ for the filthy dissemination of filthy falsifications and black slander, invented by American Intelligence and directed against the creative achievements of democratic peoples.”²²

This changed in the 1960s. As Radio Liberty grew into its role as a surrogate home service, providing its listeners with information that the regime preferred to keep under wraps, attacks on the station became more frequent and increasingly virulent. Between 1968 and 1977, attacks on RL appeared in copies of more than 3 billion printed newspapers, including major publications such as *Izvestiya*, *Komsomolskaya pravda*, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, *Krokodil*, *Literaturnaya gazeta* and *Krasnaya zvezda*.²³ For years the station was demonized in books and on Moscow radio and television. As late as 1985 Radio Liberty was featured in a Russian

²² Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty*, 37.

²³ “Measuring Radio Liberty’s Effectiveness,” *ibid.*



Another *Krokodil* cartoon on the same theme with the same players under the title of “Lies on Shortwaves.”

film called *Cancan in the English Garden*, which attracted large audiences in the USSR. It depicted a KGB agent who infiltrated RL's Munich headquarters in the Englischer Garten, and found that the CIA-financed radio was manned by liars and traitors. One Soviet critic noted, “It shows in a new light the kitchen in which the stinking fish of false reports is produced.”²⁴ Besides attacks in Russian media, RL was also assailed in broadcasts and publications in the non-Russian languages of the Soviet Union.

Radio Liberty was firmly on the Soviet radar. But media denunciation was a two-edged sword. The attacks had the effect of drawing more attention to the station, and creating a “forbidden fruit” aura that may well have increased its listenership. A Moscow writer told an interviewer that, “*In our country prohibition always produces precisely the opposite effect,*” while a Kazakh factory worker from Dzhambul claimed that, “*The more RL is jammed, the more people listen.*”²⁵ Further insights came from an editor at the widely circulated magazine *Sovetsky sport*:

As you know, *Sovetsky sport* recently featured, in a systematic manner, articles on Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe... Neither I nor our other edi-

²⁴ Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 172–173.

²⁵ “Measuring Radio Liberty’s Effectiveness,” *ibid.*

tors bear any responsibility for this material. Usually we are phoned from the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Central Committee and told that for our next issue we will receive an article of approximately 200 or 500 or 800 words. The material arrives in finished form and we are not to change one word.... It is interesting to note that as far as I am able to judge our propaganda against Radio Liberty, I get the impression that it is not having the desired result.... Now, since the beginning of the campaign I have tried to listen to Radio Liberty regularly.... There is some malicious material but much that is interesting. As far as I know, after our articles in *Sovetsky sport*, people who never had been interested in foreign broadcasts began to listen to Radio Liberty...²⁶

At the beginning of the 1970s, press attacks on RL jumped almost fourfold: from 110 million printed copies in 1970 to 416 million copies in 1971.²⁷ What generated this wave of hostility was the prospect of the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. The aim was to challenge the legality of Radio Liberty's existence on German soil in the hope of driving the station out of Munich. In 1973, when it became clear that the campaign had been a failure, and RL was still broadcasting from Munich, the number of attacks fell by half.

QUALITY CONTROL REPORTS

Another of Ralis' innovations was Quality Control. Starting in the 1960s, RL's programs were subjected to regular critiques by a panel of Russian-speaking reviewers. All the reviewers had recently arrived from the USSR, and were intended to represent the existing and the potential audience to Radio Liberty. A typical reviewer panel in 1967 included an articulate writer and journalist who could evaluate the programs from the perspective of the Soviet creative and scientific intelligentsia; a Moscow engineer; a young sailor with extensive literary interests; a former Komsomol member; a young doctor and poet; and a movie producer who had recently defected, who paid special attention to the announcers' delivery and presentation.²⁸

²⁶ Letter from Ralis to Sargeant, 25 June 1971, HIA.

²⁷ "Soviet and Eastern European Attacks on Radio Liberty," ARD Report, January 1978, HIA. These figures do not include attacks by Soviet radio or television.

²⁸ "Measuring Radio Liberty's Effectiveness," *ibid.*

Reviewers expressed a wide range of preferences, sympathies, and opinions, and aired a great many specific criticisms, but they were generally agreed that, "Radio Liberty broadcasts basically respond to the deepest and most vital aspirations of the Soviet people in general and of the younger generation in particular."²⁹

OUTSIDE EVALUATION OF AUDIENCE RESEARCH

How effective was this early research? In 1962, President Sargeant asked Wilbur Schramm, an eminent Stanford University social scientist, to visit Munich and do a thorough assessment of ARD. In a letter to Sargeant after his visit, Schramm wrote:

My impression is that your Audience Research Department is doing a careful and thorough job, and exercising considerable ingenuity and imagination... Every time I come to Munich I am impressed by the cruel conditions under which audience research has to be done here. By the rules of the game, 95 per cent of all the sophisticated methods available to field researchers in western countries are foreclosed from us. I described the process of RL audience research...as being about like a man fishing in a murky lake without any hook on his line. He is unable to see any fish, and practically unable ever to catch a fish. Only occasionally, by being very attentive, he may feel a fish brush against his dangling line. This is the kind of job Max Ralis is trying to do.

For this reason, we must be careful not to ask too much of the results of audience research... But the importance of such information should not be underestimated. The impressive thing about the audience mail and interview contacts of RL...is the many different kinds of persons who have identified themselves as listeners. They are young and old, workers and farmers, from many different parts of the Soviet Union. They are not solely intellectuals or solely non-intellectuals... The outstanding thing about the evidence is the diversity of the people...who are in RL's audience.³⁰

Schramm went on to analyze the available data, which showed that listeners to Western radio were generally better informed on the affairs of the day than non-

²⁹ "Measuring Radio Liberty's Effectiveness," *ibid.*

³⁰ Letter from Wilbur Schramm to Howland Sargeant, 19 October 1962, HIA.

listeners. (This finding recurred again and again when systematic interviewing began in the 1970s.) Schramm concluded by writing: "Let me conclude by saying simply that I think you have a solid Audience Research operation, working under difficult conditions... no claims are being made that should not be made, and the effort is in good hands."

This vote of confidence from a prominent social scientist undoubtedly did a great deal to enhance the standing of Ralis' operation, both within the organization, and with the distant "Board of Trustees" on the Potomac. Reading the Schramm materials in the New York office three years later, my appreciation of ARD was augmented and my curiosity was piqued. Audience research seemed to me to be the most interesting and inspiring aspect of RL's operations. Most of the station's work took place in a closed studio behind a microphone, but Max Ralis' research involved going out into the field to meet RL's listeners at first hand and collect information that would hopefully make the activity in the studio more relevant and meaningful.

ARD CLARIFIES RADIO LIBERTY'S IMAGE

In 1965, ARD published an Image Study of RL which indicated that identification of Radio Liberty as a US station had gone up from 4% to 18% between 1962 and 1963.³¹ The RL Policy Advisor, Robert L. Tuck, fired off a memo which declared that the study should serve as a warning to all Radio Liberty programmers.³² Noting that "*Radio Liberty is not supposed to be a U.S. station,*" Tuck suggested that the station's policy manual might have been violated, and went on to cite extracts from the manual:

RL's approach to world events is that of an enlightened emigré from the Soviet Union concerned primarily with the interests of his fellow countrymen at home.... Care must be taken to avoid creating the impression that RL represents the interests of Western countries or is the voice of any foreign government or interest.

31 ARD Analysis Report #10-65, "Radio Liberty Image Study," 24 September 1965. The full report could not be located in the Hoover Institution Archives. In fact, little remains in the HIA archives from ARD's earliest years.

32 Memo from Policy Advisor to all Supervisors and Editors, "The Americanization of Radio Liberty," 25 October 1965, HIA.

Tuck believed that the Image Study showed that the necessary precautions had not been taken. He urged writers and editors to keep the problem at the forefront of their minds, and ensure that all programs actively convey “the image of a fellow countryman abroad with no tie to any outside government or interest.”

This was the perfect example of the services ARD could render RL: by identifying its essential role. RL should speak as a fellow Soviet, not an American apologist. That was Voice of America’s job. The value of the “guest in the living room” approach was reiterated at the RL-NYU conference that I helped organize a few months later.

By the end of the 1960s, the value to Radio Liberty of the ARD mission was undisputed, but it had reached the point where pithy comments were no longer enough. Pressure was mounting to supply an estimate of audience size. It was with this goal in mind that Max Ralis hired me as his Field Representative in 1969. My mandate was to expand interviewing in the field and systematize it in a completely new structure.

THE NORDIC STRATEGY

An immediate advantage in my new job was my Finnish background. I had done considerable exploration of survey research and had ideas about how to open up Finland as an interviewing site. I had already mentioned these to Max. ARD had previously tried to set up an operation in Finland, but the attempt had proved unsuccessful. My predecessor Orest Neimanis had written a long memo about his fruitless efforts to find interviewers there.

Working in Finland was tricky because of its geographical situation and its sensitive relations with the USSR. The country had lost 11% of its territory fighting off a Soviet invasion in the Winter War of 1939–40. Even though they had remained independent, the Finns were not anxious to provoke their powerful neighbor to the East. I suspected Neimanis had not had the right kind of contacts, whereas I believed I might have a place to start, at least.

Geographical proximity and a shared border meant there was plenty of traffic from the USSR to Finland. A train from Leningrad pulled into the main Helsinki railroad station each afternoon bringing potential Soviet interviewees. The Cyrillic lettering on the green cars lent the station an exotic feel. It was relatively easy for Soviet citizens to travel to Finland because, under the terms of a Soviet-Finnish agreement, they could neither defect nor seek political asylum. The Finns would automatically reject their request, although they

sometimes turned a blind eye if the defector could make his way across the country to Sweden.

Max and I had come up with an entirely new survey strategy, which we planned to launch in the Nordic countries. Instead of focusing principally on Radio Liberty, we planned to inaugurate a study measuring Western radio listening overall. Earlier interviewers had been briefed to gather data first and foremost on Radio Liberty, but from now on there would be no bias toward any individual station. This would ensure the objectivity of the study. We hoped that it might also secure the financial participation of other Western radios such as BBC, Voice of America (VOA), and Deutsche Welle. Whereas earlier interviewers did not work from a questionnaire to guide their interviews, Max and I worked out a “questionnaire” (essentially a recording form) that structured the way the information from the interview would be written up. It treated all of the main Western stations in an equal manner, with no special attention given to Radio Liberty.

PREPARATIONS IN LONDON

To eliminate all bias, the study would have to be set up through a cut-out organization. Fortunately, one existed already. In the early summer of 1969, Max and I paid a visit to London. In a well-appointed apartment on St. George’s Square in Pimlico, Max introduced me to Joan Balcar, a British woman who had been married to a Czech. Joan was fortyish, tall, and attractive, with a distinctive upper-class accent. The husband was not in evidence, though she still used his Czech name. After a period in the British diplomatic service Joan had worked with James Critchlow in Munich in the 1950s, and later briefly for Max.³³ She was now the head of an organization called Cross-Cultural Research (CCR).

CCR had been set up by Max and Joan a few years earlier. Its purpose was to serve as an interface to handle projects and sign contracts in areas where it was undesirable to use the name of Radio Liberty. Masking the identity of the survey sponsor as a means of eliminating interviewer bias was a case in point. This meant that interviewing in the Nordic area would be officially handled through CCR,

³³ James Critchlow described her as “Joan de Wend Hunt, a willowy, witty Cambridge graduate who had joined us in Munich after a brief career in the British foreign service.” See Critchlow, *Radio Hole-In-The-Head*, 100–102.

and my identity would be that of a field representative of Cross-Cultural Research in London. In preparation for my upcoming trip, Joan fixed me up with a green CCR photo ID card. I was now accredited to a neutral research organization, and Radio Liberty was just another CCR client.

Our next meeting was with Bruno Kalnins, who had been prominent in the Latvian Social Democratic Party between the wars. Kalnins was an important figure in Latvian history, and we sought his help to begin operating in Sweden. We lunched at the opulent Café Royale. Kalnins was an impressive personage, tall and slender with an aristocratic bearing. He regaled us with stories of his native land. He was well connected with exiled Latvian Social Democratic groups in Sweden, and provided me with the name of a contact there.

Our principal London interviewer was a Russian emigré sports writer called Dima Isotov. We met him at Veeraswamy's legendary Indian restaurant on Regent Street. Interviewers were usually referred to in-house by their initials, but for some reason Dima was identified as SC, for Sports Correspondent. Since he frequently wrote about Soviet sports teams visiting England, it was easy for him to conduct interviews with the players. Max and I briefed him on our new approach to interviewing, and provided him with our new station-neutral recording form. He had good contacts with BBC, to which he occasionally contributed sports reports in the Russian language, though I doubt BBC was aware of his interviewing for us. SC was a good interviewer, but relatively high maintenance. He was highly strung and prone to the dramatic, and Joan Balcar provided a much-needed steadying influence.

FIRST STEPS IN STOCKHOLM

One further contact remained to be set up. On our return to Munich, Max sent a note to Ola Melen of Radio Sweden. Melen was the Head of Audience Research for Sveriges Radio International. Using as bait a quote taken from an interview with a Russian listener to Radio Sweden, Max informed him that a representative of Cross-Cultural Research in London would be visiting Stockholm in connection with a new survey. Would a meeting be useful? Melen agreed, and I added it to my calendar. The groundwork had been laid for me to head north and attempt to establish an interviewer network.

My first meeting was at Radio Sweden. Melen and his colleagues took me to lunch at a fashionable Stockholm restaurant, where we discussed our project and agreed that Radio Sweden would be included in the new questionnaire. This

marked the beginning of a long and fruitful collaboration.³⁴ The success of the meeting had positive implications for my upcoming visit to Helsinki. It was extremely useful to have Radio Sweden on board. With Finland's neutral neighbor participating in the project, it meant that the playing field was not confined to NATO countries.

Before leaving Stockholm, I had a cordial meeting with a group of young Latvian Social Democrats. Bruno Kalnins' introduction established me as someone to be trusted. The Latvians were interested in our project, but currently had no contacts with Soviet Latvians visiting Sweden. They undertook to provide assistance as and when they could, and later they kept their word. Especially helpful was a young researcher named Atis Lejins, who worked at the Baltic Institute and later at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Lejins moved back to Latvia when it became independent in 1991, founded the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, and was elected to the Latvian parliament in 2010.

TREADING CAREFULLY IN FINLAND

I took the overnight ferry from Stockholm to Helsinki on the Silja line. It was September, and the days were getting shorter, but the sea voyage through the Stockholm archipelago during the sunset hours was breathtaking. I stayed awake for much of the night as we glided through the dark silhouettes of the islands between Sweden and Finland. I was not alone. Most of my fellow passengers spent the trip gorging themselves on the copious smorgasbord and the cheap alcohol. With prices on board so much lower than the outrageous state-controlled tariffs on land, many Scandinavians apparently took the ferry ride just to enjoy the pleasures of cut-rate booze.

Managing for the most part to resist temptation, I thought about what I would find when I reached Helsinki. On the one hand, I was thrilled to be setting foot for the first time in the homeland of my forebears, my grandfather Carl and grandmother Lempi. On the other, I was distinctly nervous about what lay ahead. Finland was going to be a far more difficult place to work in than Sweden, and I was by no means sure of my welcome.

Fortunately, I already had contacts. My father had recently hired an editor from Finland to work for *Amerikan Uutiset* in Minnesota. Topi Halonen had

³⁴ In 1985, when Radio Sweden's Russian-language service was threatened with termination, our data showing the station had a measurable audience in the USSR helped to keep it alive.

previously worked for *Turun Sanomat*, a daily newspaper published in Turku, Finland's second city. My father had asked Halonen about his Finnish contacts, and obtained a personal introduction to Leo Matis, a senior journalist at the Finnish state radio, Yleisradio.

Matis was short of time, but he welcomed me warmly. He was preparing to fly to Athens to interview Colonel Papadopoulos, the leader of the military junta that had taken over Greece in 1967. We went out for a quick drink and discussed the project. I had the impression that he and Topi Halonen had been drinking buddies together. Whenever he mentioned Topi, a broad smile crossed his face. Matis was a fluent German speaker who had been drafted into the Finnish army at the age of sixteen as an interpreter during the German retreat across northern Finland at the end of the war.³⁵ He knew German better than English, so that was the language we spoke in. My Finnish had been learned from my grandparents as a child and rarely used since. It was inadequate to cope in a professional situation. My German, on the other hand, was quite serviceable after several years living in Munich. Matis expressed interest in the project, and I sensed he had no great affection for the Soviet Union. He said he would try to help, and that he had someone in mind. He asked me to leave him some questionnaires. Then he left to catch his plane to Athens. All in all, a positive meeting, but I wasn't expecting much to come of it. Matis was a busy man with other priorities.

Still, he had given me the name of someone else to approach: a Finn of Russian extraction who worked as a news editor at Yleisradio. He agreed to meet me for a drink at the bar of the Marski Hotel—a favorite gathering spot for international intrigue, as I later learned. This meeting was a lot less encouraging. Although sympathetic to the aim of the project, the editor felt his Russian background made him too vulnerable to take part in it. He warned me that, although the proposed study was entirely legitimate, Finland's special relationship with the Soviet Union meant that it would probably come to the attention of the Finnish security service, the SUOPO, and perhaps even the Soviet embassy. In other words, I should tread carefully.

This was the first of several warnings I received. I made it clear in all my meetings that we were proposing to carry out a neutral media study of a kind that the

35 The Finns had fought with the Germans (the Finns insisted on the term "co-belligerents" and not "allies") against the USSR between 1941 and 1944. The signing of the Moscow Armistice in September 1944 obliged them to drive the Germans out of Finland. For the most part Finns and Germans avoided open hostilities, with the exception of some fighting around the Finnish city of Kemi.

Soviets could conduct in the West without any problem, but which Westerners were forbidden to conduct in the USSR. This didn't raise eyebrows, but no one thought it would be easy.

My next meeting was with Sauli Sipilä, the editor of a well-known design magazine, *Avotakka*. My younger brother, Bob, had stayed with him on a student visit to Finland some years earlier. Sipilä steered me to the head of the Finnish Employers Association, Pertti Salolainen, a cosmopolitan 40-something gentleman who spoke excellent English. I explained the project to him in general terms. Salolainen wished me well, but advised me to be careful, because "our state boys" might cause problems if they got wind of what I was up to.

After that I took the train to Tampere, an industrial city a couple of hours northwest of Helsinki. I had an introduction to a professor of political science at the university who was likely to be interested in the project, and could possibly help. Prof. Vehmas took me to lunch in the university cafeteria. The project clearly fascinated him. He introduced me to one of his graduate students, Tapio Waris, who put me up in the student dormitory, which had an excellent sauna. Tapio wasn't in a position to do any interviewing himself, but said he had a Russian-speaking friend who had already graduated from Tampere University and was now living in Helsinki. He thought the friend might be able to meet with visiting Soviets, and took a few questionnaires to pass on.

BREAKTHROUGH IN HELSINKI

After two weeks in Finland, I returned to Munich with a number of names but no actual interviewers. It wasn't exactly a quantum leap. I had gained a foothold in Finland, but it was far from clear where it would lead. On the positive side, I had received some warnings, but had no bad experiences, and I didn't seem to have registered on any hostile radar.

The breakthrough came two months later, when we received a package from Finland with a dozen completed interview forms. It arrived in Munich in November. It had been sent to me via CCR by Leo Matis, with a note explaining that a younger colleague of his at Yleisradio had conducted the interviews during a personal trip to Leningrad. Max and I studied the completed questionnaires carefully. On first sight they seemed genuine. They included both listeners and non-listeners to Western radio. Some of the respondents were Radio Liberty listeners. The questionnaires showed that the interviewer had been able to talk to Soviets about their media use. His job at Yleisradio had no doubt made it easy for him to

get on to the topic of radio listening, and he had succeeded in gathering the information required by the questionnaire.

The next step was for me to meet the interviewer personally. I booked a trip to Finland in early December, and Matis arranged for me to meet the interviewer for a drink. His name was Göran Lindblad. He reminded me a bit of the 1950s Swedish boxer Ingemar Johansson. At first, Göran (henceforth to be known as GL) was a bit wary. He wanted to be sure that this wasn't a CIA operation. He said he had a friend who had been "burned" by the Americans and had got into trouble with the Finnish authorities as a result. He didn't explain what exactly had happened, and I didn't like to delve further. I assured him that it was nothing more than a project on media use in the USSR, and that the information gleaned would be shared exclusively with the stations in the questionnaire. It was good that I could say Radio Sweden was part of the study. The conversation progressed. We had a second beer. GL agreed to attempt some interviews in Helsinki.

GL was a music editor at Yleisradio and played the drums in a small band. He thought his position at the station would make it easy for him to approach Soviets visiting Helsinki to discuss all things radio. I left him several questionnaires, and said I planned to be back in Finland in a couple of months. We could decide then how to take things further if he wished. He mentioned that he had a friend at Yleisradio who might also be interested, and we agreed that I would meet the friend on my next visit.

Meanwhile I had arranged a meeting with the Russian-speaking friend of my Tampere contact Tapio Waris. Kari Kiuru (KK) was a journalist with *Helsingin Sanomat*, the leading Finnish daily, and he was also active in the Social Democratic Party. He made a good impression as a stolid Finn who would not come across as threatening to Soviet travelers. He was a member of the Finnish-Soviet Friendship Society, which he thought would be a good place to make contact. The Friendship Society had privileged access to the Helsinki Kulttuuritalo (the House of Culture), that frequently hosted events for visitors from the USSR. I left Kari with some questionnaires, and we agreed to meet when I returned.

With Kari Kiuru there was no initial reticence to be overcome, unlike GL. I had the impression that he was pleased to be involved in a project dealing with the Soviet Union and that, like many Finns, he harbored a quiet antipathy toward the big neighbor to the East. He was of Finnish-Karelian background and had grown up in Lappeenranta near the Soviet border. I never found out if his family was originally from the part of Karelia that was taken by the USSR in the Win-

ter War. Had that been the case, it would have given him an added incentive to take on the project.

Returning a third time to Finland in late winter, I found that the seeds I had scattered were beginning to bear fruit. Both GL and KK had been successful in conducting interviews, and were keen to continue. They did not know of each other, and worked separately. GL introduced me to his colleague at Yleisradio, Oras Pikkarainen (OP), who had already conducted a few interviews. OP was also a music editor at the radio and came from a prominent Helsinki family. He had a serious air, and gave a solid impression. It turned out that Soviet tour groups regularly frequented a restaurant close to the radio offices, Kellari Krouvi, and it was easy for GL and OP to conduct interviews there. Sometimes they would carry a tape recorder over their shoulder to make it look as if they were interviewing Soviet tourists about their impressions of Finland, and in some cases they actually did that, but the tape recorders were never used for audience research interviews.

My next visit to Finland was in the summer of 1970. By then I had three Helsinki interviewers producing work on a regular basis. Tampere, on the other hand, had turned out to be a dead end. A student friend of Tapio Waris had tried to conduct a couple of interviews but failed to complete them and decided that interviewing wasn't for him.

BIG PINE LAKE

Meanwhile there had been changes in my office in Munich. In January 1970, Max Ralis had moved to Paris. France was one of the countries most visited by Soviet travelers. Interviews with Soviet travelers had been conducted in Paris since the early 1960s, and it made more sense to use it as a base as ARD struck out on its new interview-based course. It also put a certain salutary distance between Audience Research operations and the Radio in Munich. At the outset, it was intended to be a small operation functioning as an adjunct to the Paris broadcast office of Radio Liberty, but Max didn't like to think small, and he started planning to enlarge it as soon as he had a foot in the door.

In the summer of 1970, our family went on home leave to the US. I no longer have the three-page letter that Max wrote me that summer while I was at Big Pine Lake in Minnesota, but recall very clearly his invitation to join him in Paris and put the interviewing program on steroids, with the aim of obtaining a reliable estimate of audience size and charting listening trends over time. The break-

through we had achieved with the Finnish interviewing had confirmed Max's belief that ARD was about to enter a new era, and increased his confidence in me as a key player. I don't know if he really thought it was possible to succeed in the mission he laid out in his letter, but he was offering me a challenge and I couldn't resist it.

Another thing I couldn't resist was moving to Paris. Our five years in Munich had been instructive and rewarding, though Rolf's accident had dampened some of our enthusiasm, and I look back with fond memories of the friends we made, some of whom we still have, and on our first experience of living overseas. We would miss week-end skiing in the Alps in winter and hiking in the summer. But this was Paris! This was the big league!

S E C O N D M O V E M E N T

First Steps in Audience Interviewing

1970–1980

a c c e l e r a t o

USSR Events

The 1970s were a period of economic stagnation and internal repression, but also détente.

- 1964: Khrushchev ousted as First Secretary of the CPSU. Replaced by Leonid Brezhnev.
- 1966: Sinyavsky-Daniel trial.
- 1968: Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops invade Czechoslovakia.
- 1969: Border clashes with Chinese exacerbate Sino-Soviet split.
- 1972: Signature of SALT-1 Arms Control Agreement ushers in era of détente.
- 1973: Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* published in Paris.
- 1974: Emigration policy eased. Increased emigration of Soviet Jews.
- 1975: Helsinki Agreements on security in Europe lead to greater cooperation with West.
- 1979: SALT-2 Agreement signed. Soviet troops invade Afghanistan. End of détente.

SETTING UP A PARIS OFFICE

The idea of a Paris operation to facilitate ARD's interviewing project had originally been suggested to Max Ralis by Howland Sargeant. Paris was the center of Soviet traveler traffic in Western Europe and was a more neutral spot than Munich to direct a Europe-wide interviewing operation. Max had lived in Paris in the 1930s, he liked the prospect of returning there, and he was quick to follow up on the idea. In the fall of 1969, he got in touch with the head of the RL Paris bureau, Morrill Cody.

Bill Cody was a great-nephew of Buffalo Bill Cody, (hence the nickname) of Wild West show fame. He was a former US diplomat who had at one time been Public Affairs Officer at the US Embassy in Paris (see vignette in Appendix 2). He was extremely well-connected in French government circles, and this made him invaluable to ARD. Max wanted to avoid setting up a new organizational

structure which might draw unwelcome bureaucratic attention. Cody sounded out the French authorities to see if there would be any objection to the opening of a small Audience Research office whose employees would appear on the books as belonging to the Radio Liberty press bureau, and was assured that there would not.¹ Aside from the necessary administrative links, the office would not be officially identified as part of the Radio Liberty Committee. After holding a meeting with Cody in Paris, Sargeant professed himself satisfied with the formula that had been worked out, and gave his official blessing to the move.²

Max spent some time during the fall of 1969 hunting for an office for the new Paris operation. Unable to find suitable premises at an acceptable price, he rented an apartment on Rue de Lille in the seventh arrondissement for his personal use, and set aside one of the rooms as a temporary office. He moved to Paris in mid-January of 1970. His first local hire was a secretary and administrative assistant, and he was fortunate to find Nicole Kostomaroff, a French citizen of Russian-Polish background to fill the position. Nicole had been office manager for the CBS news team in Paris, and had earlier worked for United Artists films in Paris. She was fluent in English, had serviceable Russian, and her previous work experience had shown her how to work with (and around) French bureaucracy.

While Max was setting up shop in Paris, I had stayed in Munich with the rest of the staff, conducting business as usual. My first visit to Paris was in the spring of 1970, to meet the Paris interviewers and train them to use the new questionnaire. Our best prospect was Anne-Danièle Merlero (ADM), who had been doing ad hoc interviews for several years and had good access to Soviet travelers in France. Now that we were switching over to a systematic interviewing procedure, she was requested to record every single contact, whether or not they listened to Western radio. Anne-Danièle welcomed this new approach, which she said was more “serious,” especially as it meant she would be paid for interviews with non-listeners as well as listeners. (To begin with, we paid less for non-listener interviews, on the grounds that they took up less time. Later we decided to pay the same amount for listeners and non-listeners, partly to avoid skewing the survey procedure, and partly because it sometimes took a while to determine whether an interviewee was a radio listener or not.)

By the summer of 1970, Max had managed to find office space down the road from his apartment, in the rather grand *hôtel particulier* (private mansion) of the

1 Letter from Morrill Cody to Howland Sargeant, 22 September 1969, HIA.

2 Letter from Howland Sargeant to Max Ralis, 23 October 1969, HIA.

Comte de Gramont, at 55 Rue de Lille. The new establishment allowed him to receive in style his numerous visitors from the Paris Russian emigré community, and also to expand his staff. He invited me to join him in Paris a few months later, but for various reasons we put off our move until after Christmas. We finally made our way to Paris in February 1971. We were joined there by Ruth Knutson, a Vassar graduate from Minnesota, who had previously worked in the Munich office. Ruth had spent some time in Italy studying Italian, and had now been hired back to join the fledgling office as a researcher and editor.

While Nicole handled routine administrative tasks, more complex procedures, such as payroll for local hires, were competently dealt with by Lydia Petrouskiene at the RL press bureau on Rue de Rennes. Lydia was an energetic woman in her fifties, who was not always easy to deal with. Born to Lithuanian parents in Paris, she spoke fluent Russian and English as well as French. When she was in the mood, she was funny and charming, but when she was not, her sharp tongue could reduce people to tears. Her assistant, Sonia Megreblan, an Armenian by birth, was more even-tempered. When we arrived in Paris, the bureau chief was Witold Ryser, who had previously been head of the Russian Service in Munich. He was later replaced by Semyon Mirsky, who was born in what is now Belarus, and came to RL from Israel where he had worked in the Russian Service of the Israeli International broadcasting company, Kol Israel. Other staff journalists included Fatima Salkazanova, who would later make a name for herself reporting from Afghanistan, the ex-Soviet writer Anatoly Gladilin, and the ex-Soviet novelist Sergei Yurenen. A full-time sound engineer rounded out the bureau. Although the permanent staff was relatively small, Paris was the heart of the literary emigration in the 1970s and 1980s and a lot of part-time contributors came and went. To accommodate this heightened activity, the bureau eventually moved to larger premises on Avenue Rapp.

SETTING UP A LONDON OFFICE

At much the same time, a second office was being set up in London. Audience Research had had a presence in London since 1963, in the person of Joan Balcar. Joan wore two hats: ARD for occasional interviewing activity, and Cross-Cultural Research for sensitive transactions with other stations. Soviet traffic in London was more limited than Paris, but Joan handled the occasional traveler interview, and coordinated listener panel reviews of RL broadcasts.

In 1972, Joan stepped down from both ARD and CCR to join Bedford Publications, which printed books for distribution in the Soviet Union. CCR was

taken over by her sister, Heather Hunt, who kept it alive for the next few years. CCR was no longer involved in active projects, but served as a clearing house for questionnaires sent in from the field, and for payments received for ARD research from other Western stations. It handled payments from BBC, Deutsche Welle, and Radio Sweden,³ and later Radio Canada International. It was a convenient way to avoid making payments directly to Radio Liberty. CCR was professionally audited every year and found to be in good order.⁴

Meanwhile Munich staffers David Anin and Tony Williams were transferred to London to take over Audience Research activities. For a while they shared quarters with RFE over an art gallery in Mayfair, then they moved to Kensington, and finally to an office in Putney. David never really took to London, but it was a good place for him to pursue his historical studies and his writing. When he retired and left for Israel, Tony Williams took over the office.

Tony was a UK citizen who had been the chief Russian-language translator in the Munich office. He had a keen sense of humor and could be relied on to enliven the most humdrum office business. Joy Butler Panayi, an Englishwoman with a degree in Russian married to a Greek Cypriot, was hired as an additional translator. Hilary Sternberg, a reputed literary translator of works such as Solzhenitsyn's *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, later came in on a part-time basis. The London office was essentially a translation office. One of its main functions was to act as the processing center for listener program reviews, which were known in-house as Quality Control Reports.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, Quality Control Reports (QCRs) were an invaluable source of feedback for RL programmers. The programs were chosen on a random basis, and the reviewers were emigré intellectuals or occasional defectors. The problem was that there was a limited pool of qualified reviewers. If they were used too often, they were likely to turn into professional critics who were no longer typical of the audience in the USSR. The QCRs were discontinued in the late 1970s, and a revised review procedure was instituted in the 1980s.

With field work, analysis, and translation being handled elsewhere, the Munich office was refashioned as a support operation headed by George Perry, with the help of two assistants, Sylvia Grossmann-Sadgrove, an Englishwoman married to a German, and Inna Burger, an ethnic Russian. Its responsibilities

3 Letter from Max Ralis to Howland Sargeant, 24 May 1973, HIA.

4 Letter from Max Ralis to Howland Sargeant.

were handling liaison with Radio Liberty, and dealing with the copying and distribution of reports prepared in Paris or London.

THE EMIGRANT INTERVIEW PROJECT

The main thrust of ARD's activity was to interview Soviet radio listeners who were resident in the USSR. They represented the station's current and future audience, and were the only accurate mirror of that audience's likes and dislikes, reactions and requirements. But relatively few Soviet citizens were allowed to travel abroad, and those who reached the West were not always easy to approach. When Soviet Jews were authorized to emigrate to the West on a limited basis in the mid-1960s, it opened up a new window of opportunity for audience research.

Soviet Jewish emigrants first began to trickle out of the USSR in 1965. In that year, 1,500 Jews were allowed to leave for Israel. By the early 1970s, the flow had increased considerably. More than 14,000 emigrants left in 1970.⁵ The peak year was 1979 with 51,300 emigrants. After that, their numbers dropped sharply. The number of emigrants for the decade as a whole was around 250,000.⁶

Not all the emigrants went to Israel. Some decided to go to countries such as the US, Canada, or Australia. In the 1970s, the triage point for Soviet emigrants arriving in the West was Vienna. Those heading for Israel went straight on to Tel Aviv. Those opting for other countries were diverted to Rome, where they applied for visas to their chosen destination. It generally took several months to process the visa applications, though things sped up by the end of the decade. When it transpired that a large proportion of Soviet Jews were heading for Rome rather than Israel, the Israeli authorities began offering cut-rate two-week trips from Rome to Israel in an attempt to attract more immigrants. Sadly for them, there were few takers.⁷

Max and I drew up a questionnaire on the lines of the one we were using for Soviet citizens, and it was put into the field, first in Rome, and later in Israel. Unlike the citizen questionnaire, the emigrant questionnaire included a complete list of RL Russian Service programs, which allowed us to provide crude "ratings," showing which programs were most listened to. These "ratings" were closely followed by RL programmers. The emigrants, as we had hoped, were a

5 Igor Birman, "Jewish Emigration from the USSR: Some Observations," *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, Volume 9, Issue 2, (1979): 46–63.

6 Ludmilla Alekseyeva, *History of the Dissident Movement in the USSR* (Vilnius, Lithuania, 1992).

7 Memo from Parta to Ralis, "Rome Meetings with Nicotera and Gaumert," 4 June 1980, HIA.

rich source of data. Most were not practicing Jews, although some had managed to preserve their Jewish faith and traditions under difficult circumstances. In most respects they had been typical Soviet citizens. Some of them (spouses, for instance) weren't actually Jews. But they differed from Soviet citizens in one vital respect: they had nearly all listened to Western radio stations. Emigrating from the Soviet Union was a painful process, and they had sought out support from abroad. Once outside, their attitude to the country they had left behind was usually negative and often tinged with resentment. Because of this, the citizen and emigrant databases were kept strictly apart. ARD's audience estimates were based solely on traveler data.

The emigrant data was most useful as a check on the plausibility and internal consistency of the traveler data. Many similarities emerged. The rank order of the main Western stations heard was basically the same for travelers and emigrants: first VOA, then RL, then BBC.⁸ The only divergence was in the case of the Israeli station Kol Israel, which not unexpectedly ranked first among listeners preparing for emigration. Listening behavior tallied in both groups. Often the emigrants provided the kind of detailed responses to specific programs that was difficult to obtain from citizen respondents. The emigrants were also an unrivalled source of information on living conditions in the USSR. Their observations were noted on the questionnaires, and we issued the more substantive accounts as Background Reports (BGRs).

Rome. ARD initiated interviewing in Rome in the early 1970s. The project was coordinated by Irina Ilovaiskaya Alberti, who had conducted occasional interviews in previous years (see vignette in Appendix 2). Alberti had established good relations with the Hebrew International Aid Society (HIAS), which looked after new arrivals from Moscow, and she had little difficulty locating interviewees. We were also in contact with two other agencies in Rome that handled emigrants: the Tolstoy Foundation and the International Rescue Committee. Alexandra Gaumert of the Tolstoy Foundation helped with the interviewing, and Alberti usually had several assistants on the go, some of them recruited from among the emigrants themselves. When Alberti left the project in 1976 to join Alexander Solzhenitsyn in Vermont, she recruited and trained a successor, Elena Nicotera, a Russian-speaking Italian. Elena was a case officer for HIAS, and well placed to take over the project.

8 See Chart 9 in Appendix 1.

It wasn't difficult to approach Jewish emigrants in Rome. After spending around ten days in Rome for initial processing, they mostly moved out of the city to the seaside resorts of Ladispoli and Ostia which offered plenty of vacant hotel rooms, especially out of season. As they had little to do during the months they were waiting for a visa, they had ample time to devote to interviews. Most of the emigrants would talk freely about their life experiences in the USSR, and spoke openly about their use of Western radio. Respondents were selected randomly from the HIAS transit lists.⁹ Sometimes the questionnaire was administered by the interviewer, and sometimes the emigrants filled it out themselves, with the interviewer checking the information and making any necessary clarifications on a return visit. Interviewers were paid \$10 for each interview completed. In the beginning, respondents were also paid \$10 for their efforts. This was welcome, for most emigrants had little money, but the practice of paying respondents was ultimately discontinued, since word was getting around that there was easy money to be made. (In some cases, however, respondents refused to take the money, saying they should not be paid for doing such valuable work.)

During the 1970s, I made frequent trips to Rome to meet with our interviewers, monitor their work, and touch base with officials at HIAS and the other organizations. This gave me the chance to meet some interesting new arrivals. On one visit in November 1973, I interviewed Naum Mandel-Korzhavin, a poet and former member of the Soviet Writers Union; Sergei Myuge, a prominent biologist; and Emanuel Belitsky, a former economist at the Institute of World Economy in Moscow.

I also met Yuri Gendler, a lawyer and dissident who moved to New York and became a freelance contributor to RL. Later he relocated to Munich, where he eventually became the head of the Russian Service. (By then, he had changed his surname to Handler.) Sporting a new denim suit to celebrate his arrival in the West, Gendler made a good first impression. He had been put on trial in December 1968 for protesting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and sentenced to three years in prison. Born in Leningrad in 1936, he was close to the human rights activist Viktor Krasin and the dissident Pavel Litvinov. Litvinov was the grandson of Maxim Litvinov, Stalin's Foreign Minister in the 1930s. He was forced into exile in 1974. During his years in prison, Gendler made the acquaintance of dissident writer Andrei Sinyavsky. In August 1973, shortly before leav-

9 Letter from Gene Parta to Elena Nicotera, 28 September 1976, spelling out the administrative procedures for interviewing emigrants in the Rome area, HIA.

ing the USSR, he had attended the trial of Krasin and Pyotr Yakir on charges of anti-Soviet propaganda (the notorious Article 70). Since he was close to both Yakir and Krasin, I asked him to write a report on the trial and its implications for the future of the democratic movement in the USSR. At the same time, I commissioned Mandel-Korzhavin to write a report on the situation facing members of the Writers Union. It was all useful information for Radio Liberty.

Israel. Work among Soviet immigrants to Israel started out much more slowly. The situation was politically sensitive. The Israeli government was reluctant to let Americans run an official operation on their territory lest it offend the Soviets and compromise the Aliyah (Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel). At the beginning of the 1970s, Max Ralis got a friend in Tel Aviv to carry out some interviews using the questionnaire developed for Rome, but no full-scale operations could be attempted, because Howland Sargeant had placed an embargo on contract work in Israel at the behest of the U.S. government, to avoid causing problems for the Jewish emigration from the USSR.

The embargo was finally lifted in early 1973, and Max immediately got started on an interviewing project. He had already contacted Rafael Gill, the director of PORI (Public Opinion Research of Israel), to see if it might be possible to conduct a survey of 400 or so Soviet immigrants, with RL and BBC sharing the costs.¹⁰ Now that he had the green light, Max was eager to proceed. PORI got Israeli government approval in April 1973. The survey went straight into the field. Originally it was hoped to interview only 1973 immigrants (in other words, very recent arrivals), but since PORI was encountering a high refusal rate it was decided to make up the numbers with some December 1972 arrivals.¹¹ Although the survey showed a high rate of listening to Western radio, it revealed a degree of confusion between listening to Radio Free Europe and to Radio Liberty, mostly due to the similarity of the names in Russian. In all, 247 of the 400 respondents claimed to have listened to RFE and RL, a sizeable proportion.

The first step of the Israel operation had been taken. In short order Max put together his own team of interviewers that he could supervise more closely. He found a coordinator in Eleonora Poltinikova, the daughter of a former high-ranking officer in the Soviet Army. Her husband, Avraham Shifrin, was a human rights activist and Zionist, who had spent ten years in Soviet prisons. As the

¹⁰ Letter from Ralis to Sargeant, 8 February 1973, HIA.

¹¹ Letter from Ralis to Katherine Worsley, Head of BBC External Broadcasting Audience Research, 2 May 1973, HIA. The 1972 arrivals accounted for only 5% of the sample.

author of *The First Guidebook to Prisons and Concentration Camps of the Soviet Union*, Avram was a controversial figure, but he played no part in the project. Eleonora coordinated the Israel-wide interviewing effort from their home in Zikhron Yaakov, south of Mount Carmel.

The project proceeded unimpeded throughout the 1970s. As far as I know, it was the only American-sponsored interview project of its kind at the time. The findings of the survey were shared with the national radio station Kol Israel, which broadcast to the USSR in Russian. In the 1980s, political issues threatened the project with termination, but support from the director of Kol Israel tipped the balance and we kept it alive.

THE CITIZEN INTERVIEW PROJECT

It was out of the question to conduct an interview with a Soviet citizen openly. The questionnaire was never produced during the interview. It would have alarmed the respondent and brought the conversation to a rapid end. All the interviewers used an indirect method. Questions on radio listening were posed in the course of an apparently anodyne conversation ranging over a variety of topics, eventually turning to media. Interviewers each had their own methods of remembering information, and might take surreptitious notes during a visit to the bathroom. We now had five regular interviewers working with Soviet travelers in Finland, one in Paris, and one in Athens.

On my visits to Finland, I made a point of going over interview situations with our interviewers in order to get a feel for their *modus operandi*. We discussed where and how they conducted their interviews, and how they set about filling in the questionnaires. I went several times with GL to one of his favorite interview spots, the restaurant Kellari Krouvi, in the early evening. Situated near the downtown headquarters of Yleisradio, Kellari Krouvi was a large state-owned restaurant with a number of different seating areas and a U-shaped bar with square corners. The organizations that handled Soviet visitors had a standing arrangement with the restaurant. As a frequent visitor, GL was well known to the staff there. When groups from the USSR were scheduled, they used to alert him. I could see how easy it was to make contact and conduct an interview. Since he was a Yleisradio employee, it was easy for him to strike up a general conversation about radio listening, and then broaden it out to bring in listening to foreign broadcasts. GL had worked out a notation system which he filled out immediately after the interview, and this served as a guide to complete the questionnaire.

Soviet tourist groups invariably followed a recognizable circuit. The Hotel Presidentti reserved an entire floor for their exclusive use because non-Soviet guests objected to the strong smell of *makhorka* tobacco. (This arrangement also had the advantage of limiting contacts with other guests.) A popular destination was the soft porn movie theater Kamras, where Soviet tourists would barter the price of admission since they were only allowed one dollar of foreign currency per day. Or there was the Helsinki Kulttuuritalo (House of Culture), an impressive building designed by the renowned Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, which at that time was owned by an offshoot of the communist-dominated Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL).¹²

I went to the House of Culture one evening with a new interviewer, TS, a thirtysomething Helsinki lawyer who had been introduced to me by GL. We planned to attend a gathering of young Finns (presumably of a left-wing bent) and some young Ukrainian visitors. In a large room that resembled a gymnasium, we found two groups of about twenty young people stationed more or less at each end of the room. There was no mixing. The Finns appeared eager to make contact, but the Ukrainians were reticent about getting too close. Things improved when dance music came on, and the Finns invited individual Ukrainians to dance. Some, though not all, accepted. After a half-hour the Ukrainian group leader rounded up his charges and they left. The Finns seemed disappointed by their early departure.

The evening gave me a chance to see how groups were handled, especially young people. It was clear that in that kind of situation it would be hard to conduct an interview. TS assured me it wasn't always like that, and that it was usually easier to approach individuals. Still, it was clear, both at Kellari Krouvi and at the House of Culture, that the sight of a questionnaire would have ended the interview immediately.

THE RISK FACTOR

We had to consider not just the likelihood that our contacts would take flight, but also that lack of caution might jeopardize the interviewer's personal security. Two of our interviewers got beaten up in the 1970s.

¹² The SKDL was replaced in 1990 by a new left-wing alliance. It had lost control of the building in the late 1980s.

One Saturday morning, I got a call from GL, who was on vacation in the Canary Islands. Choosing his words carefully, he conveyed to me that he had been attacked by two Russians, who he thought might have been sailors, who beat him up, and cryptically said, "We know about your friend in Paris." It didn't sound like an ordinary mugging. I booked a flight to Gran Canaria the next day. Göran hadn't told me which hotel he was staying in, but I knew he was in Las Palmas, and I was pretty sure I'd be able to find him.

I arrived on Gran Canaria on Sunday afternoon, took the bus into Las Palmas, booked a hotel room at the tourist office, checked in, and started looking for Göran. I called round all the hotels in the center, but I couldn't find him. But then about 9 p.m. there was a knock on my door. It was Göran. He had found me the same way, by asking around. The bruises on his face showed he had not exaggerated the attack. What especially bothered me was the reference to "his friend in Paris." He said his assailants were definitely Russian. They both spoke Russian and crude English. What mystified me was how they got on to him. He had booked a package trip at the last minute, and told very few people where he was going. Had someone been following him in Helsinki? Had they alerted his attackers on Gran Canaria?

Göran was visibly upset by the incident, but my presence reassured him. The fact that I had personally come to show solidarity and sort things out meant a lot to him. The next day, after looking around for Soviet ships (we didn't see any), we went shark fishing (no fish, but a painful sunburn), and toured Gran Canaria before I returned to Paris. There was no sign of his attackers. Göran did however relate another odd experience he had had a week or two earlier. He kept a large post office box at the central post office in Helsinki which he used for storage. Sometimes he put completed questionnaires in there before sending them out. He had found a strange note in the box that referred to his work with us. I don't recall how it was worded, but it shook him up.

When I returned to Paris, I decided to set up a more secure way of getting the completed interviews out of Finland. At present they were sent directly to Cross Cultural Research using our Paris address. I contacted a relative of Lynne's in Norway and asked if he would be willing to receive packages from Finland, repackage them, and send them on to Paris. He agreed, and we told our Finnish interviewers to send their materials to a private address in Norway from then on. The arrangement worked successfully for several years. It meant we received the interviews in Paris with a slight delay, but there was no overt link between the Finnish interviewers and our office in Paris.

Involvement with the Soviets was a tricky business, for more reasons than one. In 1973, Christopher Geleklidis, our interviewer in Athens, was beaten up by thugs from the right-wing military junta who ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974. Because of his frequent contacts with Soviets visiting Greece, the authorities mistook Geleklidis for a Soviet agent. When they found his office full of books in Russian (which he used as gifts for visitors), it confirmed their suspicions. They ransacked the office and gave him a serious beating.

Geleklidis called Max from an Athens hospital, and he went straight to Greece to try and sort things out. Fortunately Max had an old acquaintance (also an emigrant from the USSR) who was now the regional governor of Crete, and he helped to smooth things over. But Geleklidis was now on the junta's radar. It was a relief when the colonels' regime was overthrown the following year.

SOVIET ATTACKS ON AUDIENCE RESEARCH

The main reason Radio Liberty was regularly demonized in the Soviet press was because it provided the Soviet population with information that the authorities would have preferred to keep to themselves, and because it showed that it was possible to have opinions that diverged from the Party line. (A Kazakh listener to RL who was interviewed in the mid-1970s, a CP member, told the interviewer that he did not believe the Russians had the best interests of the Kazakhs at heart, and that he placed more faith in the Chinese.)

However, RL was attacked not just as a broadcaster, but also as an intelligence operation. Some of this "intelligence" referred to the activities of the RL Research Department in Munich, but some no doubt referred to what ARD was doing too. To the Soviet mindset, our office was an espionage operation, and our efforts to engage with Soviet citizens to gather listening data looked like attempts to recruit spies or encourage defections. Our office was forced to observe strict security procedures. The identity of our interviewers was kept confidential, the names of the people interviewed were never solicited, and we did not reveal where our interviews took place. All confidential materials were kept in the office safe. Certain people in the Soviet emigration in Paris were deliberately kept away from the office: others refused categorically to set foot there.

Max and I were both attacked personally in Soviet media, as were other staff members in later years. In 1979, two Soviet journalists turned up unannounced at the office, requesting an interview with Max Ralis. One was from *Izvestiya*, and one from *Nedelya*. They were greeted by Kroshka, a small mon-

grel dog belonging to Nicole, who came to the office every day, sat on the back of Nicole's chair, and barked loudly whenever someone rang the doorbell. Nicole scolded the dog, and showed the journalists in to see Max. The interview lasted an hour, and was civil enough. But when the story appeared in print, Kroshka had been transformed into a vicious German shepherd guarding the office, and Nicole was depicted as Max's blonde mistress. Nicole was not amused (nor was she blonde). I stayed in my office during the interview and did not meet with the journalists although I could overhear some of the discussion from the adjoining office.

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF RL AUDIENCE SIZE

With our new structured approach to interviewing, serious data analysis became possible for the first time. One interview could be compared to another, and they could be combined for the purposes of analysis and statistical analysis. In Munich in the 1960s, summary statistics had been compiled by hand, and David Anin had prepared quarterly reports of ARD activity which, though not devoid of interest, were necessarily limited in scope.

In later years, computerization would make sophisticated analysis increasingly possible, but in the meantime, we did what we could with the technology available, which took the shape of an IBM counter-sorter. It was a cumbersome machine which sat glowering in a corner of the kitchen. Questionnaires from the field were coded by hand and the codes were transferred onto IBM punch cards with the aid of a fearsome device grimly operated every few months by the puncher-in-chief, Nicole. Once the cards were ready to go, I took them into the kitchen, closed the door, and fed the punch cards into the counter-sorter to noisily achieve a set of simple statistical cross-tabulations. It was all rather hair-raising, especially when the machine chewed up the punch cards and spat them out on the floor.

Since 1956, the goal of audience research had been to obtain information on the size of Radio Liberty's audience. The tabulations provided by the counter-sorter could only describe the database itself, but still it was a major breakthrough. In May 1973, we published our first scientific analysis of Radio Liberty's audience, using a database of 1,680 interviews with Soviet travelers that had been conducted between 1970 and 1972 with our new questionnaire. The study ran to over 100 pages. The database was sufficiently large for us to analyze reactions to Radio Liberty and other Western broadcasters among different segments of the

Soviet population.¹³ However, it did not permit an estimate of the audience size and could only describe interactions within the database itself.

According to the RL Policy Manual of 1971, our aim was to reach, in approximate order of importance, the politically oriented younger generation; Communist Party members (especially those under 40); the scientific intelligentsia; the literary-artistic intelligentsia; other intelligentsia (social, economic, rural, military, etc.); lower-level Party and government officials; skilled workers; Soviet personnel abroad; and finally collective farmers and unskilled workers. Our study showed that the station was right on track. Radio Liberty's Russian Service appealed most to the literary-artistic intelligentsia, followed by the scientific intelligentsia, and the politically-oriented younger generation.¹⁴ The lowest rates of listening appeared, as expected, among agricultural workers, lower-level officials, and blue-collar workers.

For the first time we were able to compare RL's audience with those of other major Western broadcasters.¹⁵ VOA had the largest number of listeners in the survey group, followed by RL, Deutsche Welle, and BBC. In percentage terms, VOA had the highest proportion of regular listeners¹⁶ with 64% of the sample, followed by RL (44%), BBC (41%), and Deutsche Welle (30%). All stations were subject to at least some jamming during the survey period, with Radio Liberty singled out as the most heavily jammed.

SUCCESSFUL DATA VALIDATION

Although we were advancing into the unknown, Max and I were not working in a vacuum. Conscious of the need to validate our experimental methodology and test the reliability of the data, we were in constant contact with outside scholars and experts to ensure we weren't making serious missteps.

One of our consultants was Dr. Fred Williams, who was attached to the Advertising Research Council as a survey research specialist. Williams was a tall, rather austere man with an ironic sense of humor. I once took him to a nice French restaurant on the Ile de la Cité. "Smells like good French cooking," he said happily, and then ordered a plain omelette. During World War II, Williams

13 R. Eugene Parta, (Analyst), Ruth M. Knutson (Technical Assistant), "Radio Liberty's Audiences in the USSR: A Behavioral Analysis," May 1973, HIA.

14 Parta and Knutson, "Radio Liberty's Audiences in the USSR," 10.

15 Parta and Knutson, "Radio Liberty's Audiences in the USSR," 64.

16 "Regular listeners" are defined as those who listen at least once a week.

had worked for the OSS on designing civilian morale studies, notably among the French population of occupied North Africa before the American invasion. This required indirect methods too. One tactic was to have agents hang around in bars and cafes and report on the conversations they heard. They came to the conclusion that the French in North Africa did not want to fight the Allies, and that there would be no serious resistance to the planned invasion. With a few minor exceptions this turned out to be true. Williams came from a family of French Huguenots, who had been forced to flee to Germany, where they had changed their name from Guillaume to Wilhelm. When they eventually arrived in the US, they decided to change it again to the more American-sounding Williams.

In 1972, Williams ran internal stability tests on our citizen interview questionnaires and confirmed that the data was internally stable and that the research was moving in the right direction. He also developed a reach frequency curve to get a very rough idea of RL's audience. Using an ingenious method of calculation that took into account the structural biases in the survey data, he estimated that RL probably had a weekly audience of about 4 million listeners, within a range of 3 to 7 million.¹⁷

FIRST AUDIENCE ESTIMATES BASED ON SIMULATION METHODOLOGY

The following year, we improved on our preliminary estimates by submitting the encoded data to a simulation process pioneered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) by Prof. Ithiel de Sola Pool. The results were essentially the same.¹⁸

I had first encountered Pool at a conference in New York several years earlier, and he was also an old acquaintance of Max Ralis. Ithiel was friendly and outgoing, despite his professorial mien. He had the ability to explain difficult concepts with absolute clarity, and must have been an excellent teacher. He was descended from a long line of Sephardic rabbis. One of his MIT colleagues joked that he couldn't have been quite good enough to be a world-class Talmudic scholar, and had to settle for being a top professor of political science at MIT instead.

Pool was the leader of the MIT team working on the Communist Communications Project. ComCom, as it was known, had been developed under contract

17 Memo from Fred Williams to Max Ralis, "Estimated Size of RL's Audience," undated, probably Sept-Oct 1972, HIA.

18 Pool described the reach-frequency curve as "quite sensible," in a letter to Max Ralis of 16 October 1972, HIA.

from the United States Information Agency (USIA), and it aimed to simulate the flow of information through the media system in the USSR.¹⁹ The methodology addressed the basic issue of how to draw accurate estimates from uneven survey samples in a situation where deficiencies could not be corrected in the field. Since ARD's sample of Soviet respondents drew only on the relatively few citizens privileged to travel abroad, it was weighted in favor of urban, educated adults, and included a higher proportion of CP members than was found in the population as a whole. These biases had to be corrected, and that was what Com-Com aimed to do. It had previously been used to track the flow of information on the Cuban missile crisis through Soviet society in 1962.

Pool visited our office in February 1973. We were anxious to expose our database to MIT's state-of-the-art methodology, and it was agreed that Pool would submit the 1,680 interviews conducted between 1970 and 1972 to the simulation process. We sent off the package of 1,680 IBM punch cards in March,²⁰ and awaited the report with bated breath. The results were gratifying. Pool commented that, "considering the nature of the problem, that is a superb data base."²¹ He estimated that RL's "typical daily audience" was just under 6 million members of the adult population.²² Radio Liberty's overall audience in the USSR had never been measured before, and we were vastly encouraged by these estimates. For the first time in the twenty years the station had been on the air, we had the certainty that it was reaching a more than respectable proportion of the Soviet population.²³

We were now in a position to advance to a new phase of our work. Now that we had baseline estimates of audiences to each Western station, we could begin to chart listening trends. But this meant hiring more staff, finding more interviewers, locating more respondents, and increasing the size of the survey sample. During the 1970s, progress was slow, and we were only able to make estimates of

19 MIT Communications Research Program, Dr. Ithiel de Sola Pool, Director, September 1975. There are 5 reports in the series: 1. The Soviet Audience for Foreign Broadcasts; 2. The Soviet Audience for Foreign Broadcasts in Minority Regions and Languages; 3. The Soviet Audience for Domestic Media; 4. Methodology; 5. Trends and Variations in Soviet Audiences, HIA. See Appendix 3 for a discussion of the methodology as it relates to Audience Research.

20 Letter from Ralis to Pool confirming dispatch of punch cards, 12 March 1973, HIA.

21 Letter from Pool to Ralis, 16 May 1973, HIA.

22 Letter from Pool to Ralis on early simulation results, 16 May 1973, HIA.

23 Pool's initial estimate was revised downwards in a 1976 report he wrote for USIA which put RL's typical daily audience figure at 4.6 million. This was well behind VOA with 10 million listeners, but ahead of BBC with 2.5 million listeners. See "Soviet Audiences to Foreign Radio," United States Information Agency, Office of Research, R-17-76, September 1976, HIA.

audience trends every two years, using average database sizes of around 2,500 respondents.²⁴ Not until 1980 were our annual databases large enough to be able to chart annual trends in listening.

193, BOULEVARD SAINT GERMAIN

In 1973, ARD moved from Rue de Lille into larger premises on the sixth floor of a residential building at 193, Boulevard Saint Germain. This became our headquarters for the next fourteen years. The new office was equipped with several elegant pieces of Empire furniture, some rickety shelves of antique books, and a vast chilly kitchen where we housed the IBM sorter. Access to the apartment was via a rattling little elevator which opened on to a small glassed-in land-



The building which housed SAAOR on boulevard Saint Germain, Paris.
Our office was on the sixth floor.

²⁴ Overall trends in Western radio listening from 1970 to 1991 can be found in R. Eugene Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR During the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2007), 5–7. See chart 1 in Appendix 1 for the 1980–1990 period.

ing that felt like the perfect trap. It could have been the inspiration for *Three Days of the Condor*.²⁵

Aside from that, it was a great location. The galleries and antique dealers of the Rue du Bac were just down the road, and the chic boutiques and cafés of Saint Germain des Prés were a short walk away. Our visitors increased. Max cultivated relations with the intellectual and artistic lights of the Soviet emigration, both old and new. It was one of the advantages of the move from Munich. Among his contacts were the author Viktor Nekrasov, winner of the 1947 Stalin Prize for his classic World War II Novel, *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*; the dissident writer Andrei Sinyavsky and his wife Maria; and Alexander Galich, singer-songwriter and RL contributor (see Appendix 2 for vignettes of Nekrasov and Sinyavsky).

Last but not least was Noe Tsintsadze, who had been Minister of Education in the short-lived independent Social-Democratic government of the Republic of Georgia in the early 1920s. He was now a very old man and the doyen of the Paris Georgian community. Despite his age he occasionally walked up the six flights of stairs to our office instead of taking the claustrophobic elevator. Max had played a major role in getting the archives of Tsintsadze's Ministry of Education housed at Harvard University, with the help of Prof. Richard Pipes, and Noe Konstantinovich was a regular visitor. He recommended to me a restaurant called La Toison d'Or (The Golden Fleece), run by two of his old Georgian friends. When I called up to book a table, I made the mistake of speaking Russian. It was a huge faux pas, and the response was distinctly chilly: "Perhaps you'd prefer a Russian restaurant." Hastily I explained who had told me about La Toison d'Or. The tone changed at once, and I could almost hear the smile in the old man's voice as he said, "Welcome!" We used the restaurant several times for office parties.

Moving to bigger premises, we required a regular cleaner and we took on a Malagasy woman, Madeleine Rosanarivo, who spoke serviceable if idiosyncratic French. Madeleine had been schooled by Norwegian missionaries in Madagascar and was a teetotaler. We were not. Regular rituals in the office included an end of the week TGIF with wine accompanied by cheese from the reputed Barthelemy *fromagerie* on the nearby Rue de Grenelle. *Brie au poivre* was an all-time favorite. Staffers' birthdays were invariably celebrated with champagne. Our custom was to aim the champagne cork at a huge map of the USSR that took up the whole of one wall of Max's office. We managed to hit Moscow only once. Madeleine rou-

25 A celebrated political thriller movie made by Sydney Pollack in 1975.

tinely tut-tutted about the empty bottles. A particularly riotous Russian Christmas party once reduced her to tears. Guests had included Russian émigrés, French academics, and our colleagues from the RL press bureau on Avenue Rapp. We must have numbered about forty in all. Poor Madeleine was overwhelmed by the mess in the kitchen and the stacks of empty bottles the following morning. But her main motivation for working in France was to make enough money to have her entire family in Madagascar reburied properly, so presumably the sacrifice of her principles was worth it.

RADIO LIBERTY COMES UNDER THREAT

The early 1970s were not an easy time for Radio Liberty. While we were expanding our operations and pushing ahead with our research, the very existence of the Radio was menaced. Some of the attacks came, as usual, from Moscow. Pressure was put on the German government to kick both RFE and RL out of Germany. As already noted Munich was to host the 1972 Olympic Games, and this was used as leverage against Bonn by the Warsaw Pact, until intervention by the US government put the issue to rest.²⁶

But the main threat to the Radio's existence came from an unexpected quarter: Capitol Hill. As a result of various media exposés in the late 1960s, it had become publicly known that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were covertly funded from the CIA budget, and this had sparked a fair amount of outrage. Senator Clifford Case, a liberal Republican from New Jersey, charged that the CIA had been secretly spending several hundred million dollars to finance the two stations, while Senator Fulbright, a conservative Democrat from Arkansas, maintained that the stations' continued existence incited tensions and animosities between Soviet Russia and America, thereby jeopardizing détente.²⁷

CIA funding was ended in 1971. Six years earlier I had been somewhat shaken to learn where the Radios' money was coming from, but I had also been relieved to learn that we had serious backing and were not dependent on the goodwill of

26 For an interesting account of the pressures brought to bear on the German government, see Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, 209–212.

27 These political dramas have been covered in detail elsewhere. See Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, 202–227; Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty*, 131–150; Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 2000); Sig Mickelson, *America's Other Voice: The Story of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (New York: Praeger, 1983).

a few obscure foundations I had never heard of. Now that the “Board of Trustees” was bowing out, I was concerned for the Radios’ future.

To avoid the Radios’ demise, Congress passed a bill—over Fulbright’s objections—providing for one year’s funding (fiscal 1972), which was to be channeled through the State Department. Since the State Department was unwilling to take on long-term responsibility, this could only be a temporary solution. Despite its involvement in their creation, State had not always been well-disposed to the Radios. The relationship reached an all-time low during the Hungarian revolution of 1956, when Radio Free Europe was accused of misleading Hungarian listeners with unfounded assurances of a Western intervention.²⁸ Although the worst of the charges were not borne out by subsequent investigations, it was not RFE’s finest hour. In contrast, the Polish crisis earlier in the year had been handled in a responsible and highly professional manner.

THE EISENHOWER COMMISSION

In May 1972, President Nixon appointed a Commission to study the future of the Radios and make recommendations by the end of February 1973. He also requested that Congress pass a bill to ensure funding through fiscal 1973. The Commission was headed by Milton Eisenhower, brother of former President Dwight Eisenhower and ex-President of Johns Hopkins University. Other members of the Commission were Edward W. Barrett, former Dean of the Columbia University School of Journalism and a former Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs; Edmund Gullion, a former Ambassador and Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University; John Gronouski, a former Ambassador to Poland and Dean of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas; and John P. Roche, professor of Political Science at Brandeis University and a nationally-syndicated columnist. It was a prestigious list—which augured well for the future of the Radios. A group like this would not have been assembled to close the stations down. Its recommendations would be taken seriously by Congress.

Our office in Paris was not directly affected by the drama unfolding in Washington. We were still funded, and our interviewing continued. Nevertheless,

²⁸ See Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, 79–130. This is probably the most accurate account of broadcasts to Hungary by RFE and other Western radios during the 1956 revolution. It includes accounts from previously classified documents. While acknowledging that this was not RFE’s finest hour, Johnson demonstrates that the charges of actual incitement were inaccurate.

I had a back-up plan, which was to take a year off if the radios were closed and drive with the family through East Africa in a Land Rover, home-schooling the boys along the way. The project was inspired by books I had read about seeking the source of the White Nile and Blue Nile. More fantasy than reality, no doubt, and it was just as well it wasn't needed. Instead, I was invited to brief the Commission on what we had learned about Radio Liberty's audience from our expanded operations.

The meeting took place in Munich on January 23, 1973 in the office of my old boss Ken Scott, the Executive Director of Radio Liberty. Former President Lyndon Johnson had died the day before, and John Roche, who had once worked for him, marched into the room loudly proclaiming, "Today I am mourning my President!" Only a few RL executives were present. The atmosphere was informal. We were introduced to the members of the Commission, and asked to say something about ourselves. I told Chairman Eisenhower that I had shaken his hand at my graduation from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in 1964, and that got a warm reaction. When he called on me to speak, Eisenhower gave me a broad smile and a discreet wink, which encouraged me to assure the assembly that Radio Liberty had a significant audience in the USSR, and explain how we had come to know that. (One of the arguments advanced by Senator Fulbright had been that it did not have an audience.) The Commission seemed impressed by what they heard. I was pretty sure they would find a way to keep RL in business.

The Eisenhower Commission's 91-page report was published in February 1973 in a booklet entitled *The Right to Know*. Its summary included the following remarks:

Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty are unique in the entire spectrum of international broadcasting... They differ substantially from the official broadcasts of the United States and Western European nations. They operate essentially as a free press does in the United States... The stations are listened to regularly and appreciatively in the six countries under consideration: The Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria...

The Commission is convinced that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, by providing a flow of free and uncensored information to peoples deprived of it, actually contribute to a climate of détente rather than detract from it...

We therefore recommend that the stations be continued until the governments of the countries to which the stations are broadcasting permit a free flow of information and ideas, both internally and between the East and the West.²⁹

I was gratified to see that RL's broadcast services were now listed alongside those of RFE as being "listened to regularly and appreciatively." Three years of structured interviewing had borne fruit.

THE BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING

Having affirmed the need for the continued existence of RFE and RL, the Commission proposed "*an organizational structure that would preserve the professional independence of the stations, while assuring that they do not operate in a manner inconsistent with United States foreign policy objectives.*"³⁰ An artful formulation which did not say that the Radios should promote US foreign policy objectives, only that they should not contradict them, thus distinguishing RFE and RL from Voice of America (whose principal task was to explain and promote US policy positions), and reiterating the Radios' mission to speak like local voices in the countries to which they broadcast.

The Commission recommended that a Board for International Broadcasting (BIB) should be set up to oversee the operations of RFE and RL. The Board would receive Congressional appropriations and make grants to RFE and RL. Besides overseeing the operations of the Radios, the Board would protect the stations' professional independence. Fiscal controls, size and bipartisan composition of the Board, and staffing levels were determined. BIB headquarters were to be located in Washington, DC.³¹

The BIB came into existence with the passage of the Board for International Broadcasting Act, of October 19, 1973, and took over the financing and operational functions formerly handled by the CIA.³² The funding and editorial independence of the Radios was guaranteed for the foreseeable future. However, the

29 *The Right to Know*, Report of the Presidential Study Commission on International Broadcasting, Washington, DC., 1973.

30 *The Right to Know*, 3.

31 *The Right to Know*, 3-4.

32 Public Law 93-129. See Mickelson, *America's Other Voice*, 155-156, for a detailed account of the legal process, which was not without its moments of high drama.

GAO report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the previous year had emphasized the need to save money. It was decided that the Radios' administrative structures should be merged, and duplicate operations eliminated.

RADIO LIBERTY MERGES WITH RADIO FREE EUROPE

In June 1975, Howland Sargeant and William Durkee, presidents of RL and RFE respectively, both resigned, as a prelude to the coming merger. On July 1, 1975, Sig Mickelson, formerly President of CBS News, was named President of RFE/RL, Inc., and the President's office was moved from New York to Washington D.C. In October 1976, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe officially merged and became RFE/RL. RL gave up its offices on Arabellastrasse and moved into an enlarged RFE building in the Englischer Garten in Munich. Sadly, the merger led to significant cuts in personnel. Staff levels dropped from 2,500 employees before consolidation to 1,800 in 1977.³³

ARD did not escape the ambient downsizing, and we lost the position of editor/researcher occupied by Ruth Knutson. For the next few years, the Paris office had only four employees: Max, Nicole, myself, and Patricia Leroy, who had been hired in 1974 to second Nicole with administrative and secretarial functions, assist with coding, and translate from French and German into English. Patricia was born in Liverpool, but she was married to a Frenchman and had lived in France for five years. She had graduated from the University of Sussex with a degree in French. Patricia was a writer and novelist, and after Ruth's departure, she took on editorial responsibility for ARD's reports.

Despite the merger, the Audience Research departments for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe continued to function independently. One was based in Paris and one in Munich, they had different geographic areas of operation, and they used different methodologies. As yet there was no pressure on the two units to adapt their *modus operandi*. The new management in Munich had more pressing issues to deal with. The merger was proving difficult. The Radios had different cultures, and the atmosphere was tense. RFE had always considered itself a cut above RL. Some of this snobbery had to do with Eastern Europeans' generally negative attitudes to Russians, and it was also a fact that many RFE journalists had been well known as journalists or political figures in their countries of origin, whereas RL journalists had mostly been selected and trained from among

33 BIB Annual Report for 1978, 26.

ex-Soviet citizens who found themselves in Europe at the end of World War II. This changed in later years, when increased emigration from the Soviet Union brought a number of professional journalists and literary figures on to the RL staff, and standards rose accordingly.

EXPLORING AUDIENCE SIMULATION METHODOLOGIES AT MIT

I spent part of the fall of 1975 as a Visiting Research Associate in the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Ithiel de Sola Pool had invited me to come to Cambridge to learn more about the simulation techniques he had developed, with a view to adapting them to our specific needs. Two years earlier, the simulation process had provided us with our first audience estimates. Our goal now was to chart changes in the audience over time and to be able to do it in-house.

I was in Cambridge for about a month, from early October to early November. I rented a room from Dr. Margaret Bullowa, a friend of Pool who had a house near the Charles River. Dr. Bullowa was a distinguished lady in her seventies who rode around Cambridge on a bicycle with a red flag on a tall pole behind the seat so that she would be visible in traffic. Her method of locomotion, while commonplace now, was unusual then. The room was pleasant and had a desk where I could work in the evening. It wasn't far from the MIT faculty club, where I frequently had a late dinner. Occasionally I would have supper with Dr. Bullowa, who would regale me with gossip about MIT, and news of her ongoing dispute with the well-known leftist political activist and linguist, Noam Chomsky. Dr. Bullowa was convinced that Chomsky had derailed her career. She was a professor of psychology specialized in the development of young children, especially regarding speech, and she had hours of film that she had taken observing them. Unfortunately, the technical aspects of their dispute went over my head, and I never quite grasped what exactly the problem was.

I had arrived at MIT with all our IBM punch-cards in my luggage. One of my first tasks was to get them transferred to computer tape at the Harvard University computer center. This turned out to be more complex than I thought. Some of our questions provided for multiple responses, which meant that the corresponding cards had "multiple-punched" columns rather than the single response the computers demanded. This was known as "column binary" in computer jargon, and the MIT program which handled this issue had been removed a year earlier. We had to re-format our cards.

The next step was to get them into the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) computer package. SPSS was a widely used statistical package for social science data analysis which had originally been developed by three graduate students at Stanford University. When I arrived at MIT, I was a technical neophyte, and Pool assigned me one of his graduate students as a technical assistant. Walter Hill was a lanky laid-back African-American, who was very helpful in steering me through the intricacies of computer applications. Everything was new to me, but I found it fascinating. And it was a great learning experience which would be of inestimable value later.

Finally, I made an appointment with Pool in his office to learn more about the simulation process, and discuss how we could adapt it to our specific needs. Pool pulled out a yellow legal pad, and we got to work. The first thing we needed to do was create a four-dimensional population model of the USSR: Age by Gender by Education by Residence (ie rural/urban). The Soviet census did not provide statistical breakdowns that included all four dimensions, so this model did not exist.

The solution was to create our own four-dimensional table by combining existing lower-order tables from the Soviet census, e.g. Age by Education by Gender; Age by Gender by Rural/Urban; Education by Gender by Rural/ Urban. This was done using a computer algorithm based on a process that had been developed by Pool's friend Prof. Frederick Mosteller at Harvard.³⁴ The Soviet Census of 1970 had recently come out in multi-volume book form, and this is what I used to prepare the input tables. Since our previous simulation work had relied on the 1960 Soviet Census, everything had to be updated. It took me several days to get this done, working laboriously by hand. I still have voluminous hand-written notes and tables charting how I went about this grueling task.³⁵ But I did learn a lot about the Soviet census!

Once the three-way input tables were prepared, the Mostellerization program was used to compute a four-dimensional table. It was this that would provide us with a population framework for deriving audience estimates. Another of Pool's assistants was brought in to help with the Mostellerization process. John Klensin had served as a technical consultant on earlier simulation projects, and was an expert on advanced computer systems. The first time I met him, he was seated on

³⁴ See Frederick Mosteller, "Association and Estimation in Contingency Tables," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, Volume 63, Issue 321, March 1968.

³⁵ See Appendix 3 for a technical description of this process and the MIT Mass Media Computer Simulation.

a table in a loose half-lotus position. His quizzical smile gave a somewhat pixie-like impression, but John was no pixie. For many years he acted as ARD's computer consultant and methodological guide, and his contribution to the success of our work cannot be overstated.

With Klensin's help, we created a reasonably up-to-date model of the Soviet population. The next step would be to input our data to derive an audience estimate. I spent a lot of time working out by hand each of the cells in the four-dimensional table to get a better idea of how the process worked, but if we were going to do this on a regular basis we would obviously need a mechanized process. It was time to leave behind IBM punch cards, and attempt to set up a computer link to MIT from our Paris office. We needed to enter data in computer format in Paris and send it to MIT. This would allow us to access our database remotely and work in MIT's Consistent System on their mainframe computer.

Those weeks at MIT did a lot to advance my understanding of the field of audience research. My meetings with Pool were mini-tutorials, where I not only learned about the simulation algorithms, but also delved into the entire notion of social science concept formation, which was instrumental in a number of projects that we undertook later, such as an attitudinal typology of the Soviet urban population.³⁶

During my stay I renewed my acquaintance with Prof. Daniel Lerner, whom I had encountered at the 1965 conference on dissent in New York. He and his wife arranged a French-themed dinner for me at their home. The other guests included prominent scholars like Lucien Pye of MIT, Paul Kecskemeti of Harvard, Shmuel Eisenstadt of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and Rosemarie Rogers of MIT, who had been a consultant to Max Ralis in the 1960s. The time spent at MIT both expanded my acquaintanceship with leading scholars, and gave them a better understanding of the work of Radio Liberty.

FIRST CONTACTS WITH NEW RADIO MANAGEMENT

On leaving MIT, in November 1975, I went to Washington to report to the new President of RFE/RL, Sig Mickelson. Mickelson was very much the corporate executive, but he was a fellow Minnesotan, and we got on well. I had once listened regularly to the Minneapolis station WCCO, where Mickelson had headed news operations, and my initial impression was that he would be an asset to the Radios. He seemed keen to hear about my research at MIT, and claimed to be an

³⁶ See Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 30–32.

avid reader of ARD reports, which he said he found interesting and useful. But then I heard from another source that Mickelson wasn't much of a reader of anything at all, so that gave me pause for thought.

I also met with some of the staff of the newly-formed Board for International Broadcasting (BIB). I already knew Jim Critchlow, the Planning and Research Officer, from his days at RL, and I was introduced to Walter Roberts, the Executive Director. Roberts had been born in Vienna, in the days when it was still the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and had previously held high-ranking positions at USIA and the State Department. They both expressed interest in my experiences at MIT and support for our project.

Still, I was starting to get the impression that Audience Research at both RL and RFE might be something of an issue, and that some of the players in the new Washington headquarters might be eager to merge the two units under one head. But Roberts made a point of telling me that ARD should be entirely independent of the programming side of Radio operations, and should report directly to Mickelson, or even to the BIB if necessary, to safeguard its independence. When the storm clouds gathered in earnest a year or two later, it was his support and that of Critchlow that ensured our survival and our independence.

COMPUTERIZATION OF THE PARIS OFFICE

Back in Paris, my immediate task was to follow up on my work at MIT by arranging for a local computer capability. Max was in two minds about this. He had a soft spot in his heart for the old IBM counter-sorter, remembering how, right after the war, a social researcher friend in Paris had hooked up a coal-driven power supply to run one. Given the machine's enthusiasm for chewing up and spitting out punch cards, I was less sentimental. Only when our consultant Fred Williams gave it as his opinion that we had outgrown the counter-sorter did Max resign himself to a new age and a new computer.

A meeting was arranged with IBM. They proposed linking a terminal in our office to one of their mainframe computers in the Paris suburb of Neuilly. This might have solved our problems had it not forced us to use an IBM system incompatible with the Multics system that was in use at MIT. Without Multics we could not use MIT's Consistent System, and it was this that we needed to access. The Consistent System was a versatile package of data analysis programs, designed especially for social science work, and it was crucial to our project. IBM was thus a dead end.

Our next contact was the Franco-American company Honeywell Bull. This proved more fruitful. Honeywell had a computer system, the Mark III, that ran on Multics. They installed a terminal in our office linked to Honeywell in Paris, which allowed us to enter our data directly into the Multics system. First, however, we had to modify our coding system. All incoming questionnaires would have to be coded differently from now on, and we also had to recode some 4,500 existing questionnaires dating back to October 1972. The system became operational in November 1976. It had taken a year after my return from MIT to get it up and running.

One advantage of working with Honeywell was that they assigned us an American computer specialist. Janet Asanchayev had been born and educated in the US, but was married to a Frenchman of Russian emigré background. After she left Honeywell, she went on working with us as a consultant for several years.

ENHANCED REPORTING CAPABILITY

In the fall of 1977, I returned to MIT. At our request, the Mostellerization program had now been incorporated into the Consistent System. This allowed us to work directly on our data using MIT software, and to compute estimates of audience size using our tailor-made four-dimensional population model. I learned how to write “macros” (a series of Consistent System commands) to carry out complex analytical operations.³⁷ We were now ready to embark on serious analysis of the database we had built up since we began systematic interviewing in 1970.

Thanks to John Klensin at MIT, we had state-of-the-art procedures at our disposal. Klensin devised a way for us to use Telenet, an American-developed packet switching network that went into service in 1975.³⁸ He knew the people who developed it. Dialing into Telenet in Paris allowed us to access the MIT mainframe Multics computer directly. We could enter our data into a computer terminal in our Paris office, send it via Telenet to MIT, and store it on magnetic tape there. When we needed to use the data, the tape would be loaded into the Multics computer system. From Multics we were able to access the Consistent System.

Today this kind of procedure would seem commonplace, but for us in 1977-78 it was a pioneering approach. It permitted us to do for ourselves the computer

³⁷ These will be explained in more technical detail in Appendix 3.

³⁸ More technical details on Telenet and the birth of international data transfer networks such as Arpanet, a forerunner of the Internet, will be found in Appendix 3.

work needed to produce audience estimates. It also allowed us to analyze a certain number of questions relating to public attitudes that we had added to our interviewing process. We were able to issue reports in the late 1970s describing the attitudes of the Soviet public to the dissidents Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, to Jewish emigration and the right to emigrate, and to the dissident *samizdat* (self-publishing) phenomenon.

It was the first time Western researchers had been able to tap into Soviet public attitudes on such a meaningful scale, and the results were intriguing. It transpired that less than half the adult urban population was aware of *samizdat*, and only 11% approved of it.³⁹ Sakharov inspired a positive response in about 20% of Soviet citizens, 30% held negative views, and 50% had no opinion.⁴⁰ Concerning Jewish emigration from the USSR, Western radio listeners were more likely than non-listeners to be aware of the emigration (75%), and also more likely to hold liberal attitudes toward it.⁴¹

In 1977, we issued our second audience trend report. It was something of a bombshell—and not a good one. Based on 2,774 interviews conducted in 1975-76, it showed that RL's estimated daily audience had literally dropped by half since the previous reporting period. The new figure was 3.1 million estimated listeners per day, compared to 6.2 million in 1973-74. VOA's audience had increased during the same time frame.

The drop was attributed to a change in Soviet jamming patterns. In their Annual Report, the BIB noted that jamming of most Western broadcasters had ceased on September 30, 1973, while jamming of Radio Liberty had apparently intensified.⁴² This conclusion was based on both interview data and engineering reports. While conceding that the finding was disturbing, the BIB noted that RL technical facilities were currently undergoing an upgrade, and announced that it would be monitoring closely the effects of improved transmission facilities, better scheduling, and improvements in RL programming which were already underway, or planned in the near future. Of course, it was difficult for a heavily-jammed Radio Liberty to compete with the unjammed broadcasts of Voice of America and BBC.

39 R. Eugene Parta, "Samizdat, the Soviet Public, and Western Radio," AR 9-77, September 1977.

40 R. Eugene Parta, "Andrei Sakharov and the Nobel Peace Prize," AR 2-76, 1976. An unofficial study conducted internally by a group of Soviet sociologists in 1981 showed very similar results. See Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 86.

41 R. Eugene Parta, "Soviet Citizens and Jewish Emigration from the USSR," AR 9-74, July 1974.

42 BIB Annual Report 1978, 23-24.

Although the decrease in listenership was a blow, the reactions to our finding made it clear that our data was being taken seriously in Washington. The figures were not encouraging, but the methods by which we had acquired them were not called into question. Our collaboration with MIT and our structured interviewing methods had gained us respectability and credibility in the circles that counted.

NEW MUNICH MANAGEMENT UNDERMINES AUDIENCE RESEARCH

But while we had been improving our ability to gather and analyze data, the threat I had vaguely sensed in 1975 had been taking shape. In October 1976, RFE and RL were officially merged. Mickelson stayed on as President, based in Washington, but the RFE/RL board of directors appointed a new Vice-President and CEO working out of Munich. Alex Buchan was a Scot who had emigrated to the US as a child, and had had a highly successful career in the satellite broadcast industry, as well as a stint at USIA. It was to him that ARD would henceforth be reporting.

At our first meeting in Munich in the summer of 1976, he was perfectly cordial. He had an easy smile and a wry sense of humor. He commented favorably on the work of ARD, but wanted to know why it was based in Paris. Using a phrase I had picked up during my short-lived career as a political aide, I responded: "You go hunting where the ducks are." I explained that Paris was a better location than Munich to conduct interviews, since it was the center of Soviet traffic in Western Europe, and the response seemed to satisfy him.

Shortly afterwards, he visited our office in Paris, and met Max for the first time. I sensed that communication between them was a little strained. Buchan was a straight-shooting American executive unschooled in the exotic ways of our broadcast area, while Max was a cosmopolitan who had lived in several different countries, was fluent in four languages but perfect in none, and preferred the oblique approach and an elliptical means of expression. I could see that it was never going to be a marriage made in heaven.

Things began to go downhill in October 1976. Three months after his arrival in Munich, Buchan brought an old friend named Ernie Gudridge into the RFE/RL operation. Gudridge had many years of experience at local radio stations in the Midwest, but no familiarity with international broadcasting. It was never clear why Buchan brought him to Munich, but the most likely explanation seems to be that he wanted a confidant he could trust in an alien environment. Needing to find Gudridge a piece of bureaucratic turf, he created a new executive posi-

tion as Director, Department of Program Services that placed Gudridge directly over the Audience Research units of both RL and RFE. Mickelson had already broken with the company tradition of having Audience Research report directly to the President when he assigned our reporting to Buchan. Now Buchan had passed us on to Gudridge. Clearly Audience Research was being downgraded within the organization.

On first sight, Gudridge seemed amiable enough. He was somewhat overweight and wore aviator glasses. He had been born, raised, and educated in Minnesota, and later spent twelve years in Kentucky working for various regional radio stations. He had no knowledge of the RFE/RL broadcast area, and entirely failed to grasp the sensitive nature of audience research operations, but to prove to his new boss how busy he was, he began systematically meddling in the work of both Soviet and Eastern European audience research. Most of his interference demonstrated how little he knew about either audience research or international broadcasting, and it took both time and patience to field his requests.

Gudridge's meddling in daily operations was annoying, but relatively harmless. More serious were the questions he and Buchan began to raise about field operations, specifically those of ARD. It was true that we did not handle interviewing in the same way as our counterparts at RFE. Since it was considerably easier to approach and interview Eastern Europeans, the RFE audience research unit had been able to train commercial institutes to handle their interviewing. Their major institute in Vienna, INTORA, had been specifically formed to do RFE field work. We, on the other hand, were still handling interviewers directly, through the nominal interface of CCR. Buchan and Gudridge considered this unorthodox and possibly dangerous. Interviewing in Finland made them particularly nervous. They were concerned that it might be considered "espionage," and bring unwelcome attention to RFE/RL. They also queried the process by which CCR made direct payments to individual interviewers. Gudridge once asked me if we had consulted the Finnish Better Business Bureau before starting our work there. That was always what he did, he told me, before moving his business into a new area. He seemed to be serious. I groaned inwardly.

In the spring of 1977, Buchan and Gudridge took their concerns to Mickelson in Washington, and Mickelson brought in Stu Ross, the RFE/RL legal counsel. The three of them met with the BIB to discuss ARD operations. The BIB members present were Walter Roberts, James Critchlow, and Thomas Quinn.

Mickelson and Buchan expressed the view that certain ARD activities ought to be abandoned in the interest of the Radios, and that efforts should be made to

find a more conventional means of measuring the audience to RL. Critchlow pointed out that orthodox procedures could not always be used, given the sensitivities involved in interviewing large numbers of Soviet citizens. He noted that the quality of ARD materials had been thoroughly reviewed during his tenure as head of Soviet research at USIA from 1972-76, that they had stood up to scrutiny, and that the USIA Office of Research currently used the data for its own projects.

While defending ARD operations as being in the national interest, both Critchlow and Roberts were clear that they would not condone any inappropriate activity, and that they were not unsympathetic to management's concerns. It was proposed that if ARD could not operate legally within RFE/RL, a procedure should be found to allow it to report directly to the BIB.⁴³ ARD was not being accused of any improprieties, that much was made clear, but a more conventional organizational method would have to be found.

The upshot of this was that interviewing in Finland was put on hold until new arrangements could be set up. This caused an immediate drop in the number of interviews we had available for analysis. Interviewing in Finland at that time provided about half of our respondent cases.

OVERTURES TO FRENCH SURVEY RESEARCH FIRMS

In an attempt to compensate for the drop, Radio management funded an experiment with two commercial polling institutes in Paris to interview Soviet citizens openly. Attempts to do this a few years earlier had failed, and were no more successful this time around. One of the institutes (SOFEMA) was unable to get the project off the ground for lack of suitable interviewers, while the other (COFREMCA) succeeded in conducting a few interviews of mediocre quality, which were considerably more expensive than the Finnish project.

Most commercial institutes lacked the expertise and area knowledge to work with Soviet travelers, but the third French institute we tried was more successful. Field Service, based in Versailles, managed to conduct 105 interviews, working with our tried-and-tested indirect method and never producing the questionnaire during the interview.⁴⁴ Their first interviews weren't up to the standard required by our database, but they showed promise. The interviewers had grown up in the USSR. They had proved their ability to make contact with visiting Sovi-

43 BIB Memorandum of Conversation, 3 May 1977, HIA.

44 Memo from Ralis to Gudridge, 12 May 1978, HIA.

ets, and I was confident that they would eventually obtain usable data. While the interviews were more expensive than those we had conducted in Finland, this was the beginning of a long and mainly fruitful relationship with Field Service.

Meanwhile, our long-time French interviewer, Anne-Danièle Merlero, set up her own firm, Sondage Service, as a mechanism to allow her to go on working with us.

MUNICH MAKES A PROPOSAL

In December 1977, the exiled Soviet bard Aleksandr Galich, who was an RL contributor, died in a tragic accident. While attempting to set up a new Grundig stereo set in his Paris apartment, he apparently electrocuted himself. The French police investigation report was never released. His daughter later claimed it was a KGB murder.⁴⁵

Both Buchan and Gudridge came to Paris for the funeral. I was surprised the latter had bothered to come, but it turned out he had a good reason.

The ceremony was held at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral on Rue Daru in the 8th arrondissement. As we walked back from the cathedral, Gudridge sidled up to me and said, "The trouble with you and Max is that you like eating French bread too much."

Disconcerted by this bizarre remark, I asked him what he meant.

"You like living in Paris too much. It would be much better if you were back in Munich."

So that was what they wanted.

Gudridge intimated that if I were willing to return to Munich, I would be put at the head of the ARD operation, and Max would be retired and put out to pasture. I replied that it was essential that we remain in Paris for operational reasons, and added that Max, who was then 61, had several good years before him. Gudridge dropped the topic, but he had said enough. Clearly he was planning to carve out a little Audience Research empire for himself. When we got back to the office, I told Max that I thought they wanted to move us out of Paris and back to Munich, and combine the RL and RFE audience research units. I didn't mention the seamier side of Gudridge's offer.

But Max may have divined what was afoot. He suffered a stroke a few weeks later, and was confined to home for about a month, after two weeks in hospital. It

⁴⁵ See *Moskovsky komsomolets* interview with Alena Galich, "My Father Was Murdered," 10 January 2013.

seems likely that the pressure he was under from Munich management contributed to the attack. Knowing that Buchan and Gudridge were out for blood, he requested that his condition remain a secret while he was in the hospital. No one was to tell Munich what had happened. Max and I talked on the phone each day, and I kept him up to date. The office continued to function as normal. If someone from Munich called for Max, we would say that he'd call back later. As far as I know, no one was ever any the wiser.

THE BIB INVESTIGATES

In January 1978, the BIB dispatched its Planning and Research Officer James Critchlow to Europe to undertake a study of RFE and RL audience research operations, and investigate the concerns that RFE/RL management had raised about ARD.

Before Critchlow left for Europe, he and Roberts invited two experts to evaluate RL's audience research. The experts were Ithiel de Sola Pool of MIT and Leo Bogart, a specialist on media research at the Newspaper Advertising Bureau. BIB Chairman John Gronouski, a former US Ambassador to Poland, who had been a member of the Eisenhower Commission, was present at the meeting. Gronouski brought up three questions. How reliable was the past work that had been done? What was the rationale for the methodology employed, specifically Mostellerization? What were the relative merits of "in-house" versus contract data collection?⁴⁶

The experts' responses confirmed that ARD's approach to audience research was serious and well-founded. Pool described the Mostellerization process at length, and noted that, in cases where RL data could be matched with Soviet data, the findings showed a great deal of consistency. Bogart explained how similar methods were used in his field to estimate characteristics of groups to whom access was difficult, citing unemployed African-American teenagers as an example. Gronouski was convinced. Aware that audience estimates played a vital role in determining allocation of resources by management, by the BIB, by the Executive Branch, and by Congress, he agreed that the Finnish project could be revived if it was contracted through a commercial polling institute.⁴⁷

Obtaining the BIB Chairman's support for our work was an excellent start to Critchlow's fact-finding trip. Still Jim took his mission seriously. Part of his task

⁴⁶ Critchlow BIB Memo to File, "Meeting on Audience Research," January 1978, HIA.

⁴⁷ Critchlow Memo to File, 2-3, HIA.

was to take a look at the audience research operations of both RL and RFE in different locations, and his itinerary took him to London, Vienna, Rome, Israel, and Paris. He also paid two visits to Munich to solicit the views of management on the state of audience research. When I spoke to him in Paris about our problems, he was sympathetic, but made it clear that he wanted to conduct an unbiased study of our work. He spent a lot of time with Anne-Danièle Merlero, and was impressed with the way she went about her interviewing.

The report Critchlow issued in May 1978 was supportive of both RL and RFE audience research operations, and tackled head-on the issues that had arisen with Munich management. He charged that the insertion of a new staff layer between the two highly-qualified professionals who ran the audience research units (Max Ralis and Henry Hart) demonstrated a lowered management priority for audience research. He noted that, while RFE had been able to maintain its basic program of data collection and analysis, the situation with RL audience research was critical, since the decision to discontinue field interviewing at the most important location had deprived RL of more than half its capability to interview Soviet citizens. He called for prompt and resolute action to develop new interview sources, and urged management to give this high priority.⁴⁸

Munich took umbrage at the suggestion that they were downgrading audience research, and cited the funds provided for the experiment with the French commercial institutes in their defense.

NEW INTERVIEWING STRUCTURE IN FINLAND

Thanks to BIB pushback, Munich management had given me permission to look for a commercial operation that could handle interviewing at the “Northern Site.” I knew that the journalist Kari Kiuru owned a research and public relations company, KPR-Marketing. The company had never been involved with our interviewing work, but I decided to see if Kari would be interested in expanding his activities. There were several questions Kari needed to answer. Could KPR hire our existing interviewers? Could he take on new ones? Would his journalistic obligations give him time to deal with the administrative and fiscal issues that would arise? Was he prepared to handle the added responsibility? Moving from

⁴⁸ James Critchlow, “Audience Research at Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty,” compiled for the Board for International Broadcasting, Washington, DC, 19 May 1978, HIA.

conducting interviews on his own to managing a group of five interviewers would be a big step, especially in a country where the activity was politically sensitive.

I flew to Finland and made my proposal. Kari thought about it for a day or two, made some inquiries, and finally agreed. I was jubilant. We now had a bona fide registered company in Finland to conduct our work there. I returned to Paris hoping that this would satisfy Munich management. I have no idea what was said between Buchan and Gudridge when they learned what we were proposing, but our plan had strong BIB backing and they had to agree.⁴⁹ They commended me for solving the problem. By May 1978, we were back in business. By regularizing Finland and engaging a commercial firm in France, we had dodged a bullet. But there was more to come.

CLOSING THE LONDON OFFICE

We had won a battle, but the war was still being waged. Buchan and Gudridge were determined to curtail ARD's operations, and eventually return them to Munich. Their next target was our London office. They proposed a raft of changes starting in July 1979 that would severely limit our operations. They wanted to ax the emigré interview project, eliminate program reviews, and terminate two positions in the London office. The reason invoked was the need for budgetary cuts.

Max retorted that emigré interviews were a unique, cost-effective, and much valued source of technical and background information, and that program reviews were useful and well-received.⁵⁰ The termination requests were clearly an attempt to cripple ARD, and force us to limit our activities to citizen interviewing—without even providing sufficient funds to do that. In the previous two years we had already made personnel cuts. In Paris, an editor/researcher position had gone (Ruth Knutson). In London, we had terminated an executive position (Andre Yedigiaroff, who had been hired by Max when the New York office closed), and we were in the process of letting go a researcher/translator (Hilary Sternberg).⁵¹

Gudridge and Buchan never understood the audience research operation, and were, in any case, unsympathetic toward ARD. Part of this was simply a lack of chemistry between them and Max. It was clear that each side was talking past the other. As Gudridge had already made plain, Munich wanted to eliminate Max,

49 BIB Memo from Critchlow to Roberts, "Audience Research Capability at the Northern Site," 4 May 1978, HIA, BIB Microfiche.

50 Memo from Ralis to Gudridge, "Decision Package for FY 80 Budget," 22 May 1978, HIA.

51 Memo from Ralis to Gudridge, 24 April 1978, HIA.



Andre Yedigiaroff, Max Ralis, and George Perry at Andre's send-off party in London in 1980.

and bring what remained of ARD under their control. They continued to press for downsizing or closing the London office. Reduced to horse-trading, Max demanded an additional research analyst for Paris. At first Munich promised two slots for Paris as compensation for the loss of London, but then they withdrew the offer, claiming budgetary problems.

NEW MANAGEMENT, NEW SOLUTIONS

Matters were unexpectedly resolved when Alex Buchan suffered a serious stroke. He resigned his position, and left the organization. Gudridge left with him. I don't know what became of them after leaving the Radios. The Buchan-Gudridge interlude barely figures in any of the books that have been written on the history of the Radios.⁵² Their tenure has sunk without trace. Yet during the years they were in Munich, from 1976 to 1978, ARD was fighting for its life.

⁵² In his book *Radio Hole-in-the-Head*, James Critchlow referred to the incidents but was so outraged by what Gudridge was doing that he refused to refer to him by name, calling him "Dud" instead. See Critchlow, *Radio Hole-In-The-Head*, 168–169.

In the course of 1978, Radio administration had been moved from Washington to Munich at the behest of the BIB, which felt that management should be closer to the broadcast operations. Sig Mickelson stepped down from the Presidency of RFE-RL in mid-1978, and was replaced by Glenn Ferguson, the former President of the University of Connecticut, who would be based in Munich. It was a relief to see a new team in place. Ferguson struck me as intelligent and reasonable: someone we could do business with.

He was seconded by Ralph Walter, a longtime Radio official. Walter was a former Policy Director of RFE, who had worked on Sig Mickelson's staff in Washington since 1975 as Vice-President for Programming and Policy. In that capacity, he had advised Mickelson on ARD. As mentioned earlier, I had met him in New York in 1964 when I interviewed for a position at RFE. Although Walter shared the disdain of many RFE employees for Radio Liberty, we had established an amicable relationship. Back in Munich, he was now ARD's principal overseer. He had been following our activities for the past year, and knew exactly what he wanted to do. One of his first actions was to change our name. ARD was renamed SAAOR, standing for Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research. At the same time, RFE audience research was renamed EEAOR, for East European Audience and Opinion Research.

Walter then moved decisively to resolve our issues of personnel and office location. Max had already been in contact with him on the frozen slots. Walter had long believed that RL audience research should move back to Munich, but he acknowledged that for the present it made sense to maintain the Paris operation.⁵³ He was not in favor of maintaining an office in London, however, considering that our operations were too spread out and needed to be regrouped. What he proposed was formally winding up CCR; closing the London office as of March 1, 1980; offering the remaining staffers Tony Williams and Joy Panayi a transfer to Paris; hiring Florence Pitts, an American who had recently worked as an interpreter in the USSR on a massive hotel-building project (the Cosmos), as a field assistant and translator in Paris; and hiring a new research analyst for the Paris office. He urged me to make a recruiting trip to the US in the near future to interview candidates for this last position.

Walter's other suggestions were to close down our Munich operation, transferring George Perry and his assistants to other positions in RFE/RL. Liaison

53 Memo from Walter to Ferguson, "The Future of Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research," 23 January 1980, HIA.

with operations in Munich would be handled by his office. Our reports would be distributed by Public Affairs. He recommended that either Max or I, or both, should visit Munich every month to ensure that audience research was actively involved in program support. In other words, audience research would be centered in Paris.

In the event, Tony Williams and Joy Panayi chose not to move to Paris for family reasons. Sylvia Grossman joined EEAOR as a senior secretary. George Perry, a native Polish speaker, was transferred to the Polish section of the Broadcast Analysis Division. Florence Pitts was hired in March 1980 as a field assistant working primarily with interviewers in France, but left after one year to return to the US. I scheduled a hiring trip to the US in May 1980 to meet with candidates for two staff positions: a research analyst, and a field assistant.

After two extremely fraught years, the nightmare was over. Walter's changes amounted to a vote of confidence in the operations of the newly renamed SAAOR. We were preparing to move into the 1980s with an expanded staff that was better suited to our developing capabilities and requirements. Assembling that team was to be my next priority.

Audience Research Breaks New Ground

1980–1985

s f o r z a n d o

1980

USSR Events

Soviet climate under elderly leaders remains immobile and repressive.

- January: Andrei Sakharov exiled to residence in Gorky.
- July: Moscow Olympics. US boycott to protest invasion of Afghanistan.
- August: Polish government authorizes independent trade unions, notably Solidarity.
- October: Prime Minister Kosygin forced out due to bad health.
- December: Death of Kosygin.

The 1980s marked a change in the fortunes of Audience Research. RFE/RL was no longer under external threat, and neither were we. The Radios' *raison d'être* was assured, and the work we were doing was increasingly respected. We had firm foundations upon which to build, and we had increased financial support from the Reagan administration.

From 1980 onwards, SAAOR was expanding, taking on new staff and broadening the scope of its activities. Interviewing was opened up in several additional countries; the simulation methodology was becoming more and more sophisticated; we could now analyze the data from a variety of viewpoints; and we initiated several new report series.

In the Soviet Union, after the death of Brezhnev in 1982, the “period of stagnation” came to a close, and in the space of three years three General Secretaries succeeded him at the head of the state. Over the course of the decade, reform came to dominate the agenda, first under Andropov for an abortive few months, and then in a more sustained way under Gorbachev.

There was a lot happening, and in order to cover it all adequately, I'll be looking at each year separately.

STAFF EXPANSION

In 1980, as soon as we received permission to add two positions in Paris, I started looking for candidates. For several years RFE/RL had run a summer internship program which allowed a dozen or so graduate students to work in different departments of the Radios. I contacted Keith Bush, the director of the Research Department, to see if he could recommend any of the recent crop of interns. Bush was a former British military officer who had trained at Sandhurst, though he later became a US citizen. After a military career which included routing insurgents in Malaya, he took an advanced degree in Soviet Affairs at Harvard, and became one of the top Western experts on the Soviet economy.

Keith suggested a candidate who might be a good fit. This was Charlie Allen, who had returned to Harvard after his stint at the Radio to finish a Master's Degree in the Soviet Union Program. Bush described him as "a diamond in the rough who speaks excellent Russian." I made some more inquiries. It looked as though Allen would be a good candidate for the field assistant position.

That left me with the analyst position to fill. Through Jim Critchlow of the BIB, I heard that Mark Rhodes, a former student of Prof. Ellen Mickiewicz of Emory University in Atlanta, was looking for a job. Mickiewicz was an authority in the field of Russian media studies. She had guided Mark through a Ph.D. program at Michigan State University, and thought he had excellent potential. Mark was currently working as Slavic bibliographer at the Michigan State University library, and teaching political science part-time at the maximum security prison in Jackson, Michigan.

I contacted both candidates to see if they were prepared, in principle, to move to Paris and work for SAAOR. They were. I set up appointments in the US in May. Max approved my plans, but made few suggestions regarding the candidates. His mind was elsewhere. He was about to turn 64, and RFE/RL's mandatory retirement age was 65. He was not anxious to retire, and he was trying to find a way to stay on longer.

NEW RESEARCH ANALYST: MARK RHODES

My first stop was at Michigan State University in East Lansing to meet Mark Rhodes. There was a tornado warning in force when my plane approached

Detroit, and we had to circle for half an hour until it cleared the area. Mark was at the airport to meet me. We drove to his home, which was about an hour away, and were greeted by his wife Kathy and his baby son Alex. Mark and Kathy were very welcoming, and Kathy asked what she could get me. I replied that I would love a cold beer. Mark was quiet, and Kathy just said "Mark." He disappeared out the back door and came back in about fifteen minutes with a six-pack of beer. I'd been living in Europe too long, and had mistakenly assumed they would have beer in the house. It turned out that they were essentially teetotalers at that point. (Moving to Paris soon cured them.)

Next day Mark gave me a tour of the university campus, and over lunch I explained more about who we were and what we were doing. Mark was confused at the outset, and referred a couple of times to Voice of America, which he took to be his potential employer. I set him straight. On the flight out of Detroit, I reviewed the pluses and minuses of the hire. I liked both Mark and Kathy, and thought that Mark would fit well into the office culture. He would clearly be able to handle the analyst's job. The subject of his Ph.D. thesis had been an analysis of Letters to the Editor from readers of major Soviet daily newspapers. Obviously this required a knowledge of Russian, and that was going to be important in the office I wanted to develop in the future. Even though Mark's Russian was essentially passive—a research tool more than a spoken language—Ellen Mickiewicz had given him a glowing recommendation.

What concerned me more was the Rhodes family's ability to adapt to life in Europe. They had never lived outside the US, never even traveled abroad, and I worried that they might have difficulty adjusting—especially Kathy, who would be spending her days at home with a young child in a strange country. After weighing the different factors, I decided it was worth the risk, and made a job offer a few weeks later. Mark accepted. I later learned that he had had two other job prospects which would have allowed him to stay in the US, but he thought ours was the most interesting. He was formally hired by RFE/RL's Washington office. The RL Paris news bureau handled local hires but was not equipped to deal with US staff, who enjoyed various overseas benefits including housing.

Mark arrived in Paris in August 1980, found himself an apartment in a modern high-rise building with a swimming pool (uncommon in Paris), and started work. His first task was to draft a paper on how listener behavior was influenced by demographics. He showed it to me, and I thought it was a good first effort. Then he showed it to Max. Puffing slowly on his pipe while Mark explained the contents of the memo, Max observed, "That's not very interesting." Quintessen-

tial Max! He had always attached more importance to personal stories than to abstract data, but Mark didn't know that. For a new analyst, the remark was disconcerting.

Mark was the first hire we had ever brought over from the US, and it was several months before his family was able to join him. We had to obtain his residence permit before they could travel. The process turned out to be longer and more complicated than we had foreseen, and Mark became increasingly impatient and lonely. He would sit in his office sadly whistling the Hank Williams song *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*. Nicole, who sat next door, said it was driving her crazy. Finally, RFE/RL's American lawyer in Paris, Guy Dunham, found the right person in the French bureaucracy to handle Mark's residence permit, and the family arrived in time for Thanksgiving.

Max by then was reacting more positively to quantitative analysis. 1980 was the year that SAAOR issued its first trend analysis based on a single year's data. Previously we had had to use two years of data to study audience trends, but this was changing, thanks to expanded interviewing in the late 1970s and in 1980.¹ We also issued a report showing the trend in audience estimates for the period from January 1973 to June 1980.²

NEW FIELD ASSISTANT: CHARLIE ALLEN

Charlie Allen joined the office in October 1980. After interviewing Mark in Michigan, I had flown to Boston to meet Charlie in Cambridge. We went to the Iruna, a Spanish restaurant near Harvard Square, for an early dinner. Charlie was much more extroverted than Mark, and immediately expressed interest and enthusiasm for the job and for Paris. Having interned at RL in Munich the previous summer, he was familiar with the Radios and knew a bit about living in Europe. We hit it off right away and found we had a good deal in common.

I saw at once that Charlie would make a first-rate field assistant. His spoken Russian was excellent, colloquial even, and his outgoing personality would be perfect for the position I had in mind. Charlie had also spent a term in Leningrad studying Russian. I decided pretty much there and then to make him a job offer, though it took a few weeks to cut through the red tape. Charlie had a sim-

1 R.E. Parta, "Trend Report: RL's Audiences in the USSR: July 1979-June 1980," AR 7-80, HIA.

2 R.E. Parta, "Weekly Audience Estimates for Major Western Broadcasters to the USSR: January 1973-June 1980, AR 10-80, HIA.

ilar reaction. He later said that he knew by the end of the evening that our dinner was likely to change his life. He had been offered a job in the research department in Munich, but he was drawn to the job at SAAOR, and turned the Munich offer down.

As with Mark, it took a couple of months to obtain Charlie's French residence papers, but Guy Dunham had been through the procedure once already, and by the end of the year Charlie was legal. The problem of legalizing the presence in France of non-French employees seemed to have been solved. Future employees received their papers without a hitch. French bureaucracy was known for causing difficulties with foreigners' work permits, but the Dunham and Porter law firm was well-connected, and RFE/RL seemed to have acquired some kind of favored-applicant status.

Charlie's early dealings with Max went off somewhat better than Mark's. One night he missed the last métro home and, rather than walk back to his apartment on the Right Bank, he decided to sleep in the office. He settled down on the couch in Max's room. Just before seven, he was woken by the sound of a key turning in the outside door. The door opened and in walked Max, nattily dressed as always, with his mane of silver hair neatly brushed back, and a stern expression on his face. Charlie was horrified. Conscious of his rumpled clothing and multi-directional hair, he expected to be upbraided for invading Max's turf. Instead Max cracked a smile, offered him a blanket, poured him a cup of coffee, and settled down to chat. Charlie had initially found Max inscrutable and Byzantine, and he was surprised and reassured by this display of compassion. That too was quintessential Max.

Despite the loss of positions in Munich and London, SAAOR was considerably strengthened by these two new arrivals. But there was still a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads. Max would be turning 65 in July 1981, and he was not anxious to leave. His step-daughter Baya had a year to go before she passed her *baccalauréat*, the high school degree. Max and his wife Danièle were planning to move to Orléans when Max retired, but they wanted to stay an extra year in Paris for Baya's sake. When Ralph Walter, our overseer from Munich, came to Paris in December 1980, Max invited him to dinner at his apartment with Danièle and Baya, and proposed extending his tenure for another year. Walter said he would consider it. Max took this to mean that Walter was giving his assent. Unfortunately, Max had misunderstood what Walter meant—and this would lead to problems the following year.

1981

USSR events**Repression and stagnation continue in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.**

- Increasing crackdown on dissent in the USSR.
- December: Martial law decreed in Poland.
- December: Jamming reinstated on VOA, BBC, and Deutsche Welle.

1981 was a seminal year for SAAOR. The composition of our staff changed radically, and the office entered an era of escalating field interviewing and expanded data analysis that lasted for the next ten years. After several years of staffing uncertainty, difficulties with Munich management, and budgetary constraints, SAAOR was finally in a position to forge ahead, thanks to a consolidated team and strong management support. But a few hurdles still loomed.

BOMBING ATTACK ON RFE/RL HEADQUARTERS

The year started off literally with a bang. On Saturday, February 21, 1981, in the late evening, a group of international terrorists led by the Venezuelan-born Ilyich Ramirez Sanchez, better known as Carlos the Jackal, bombed RFE/RL headquarters in the Englischer Garten in Munich. Carlos was in the pay of the Romanian Securitate (secret police), carrying out orders from Romanian President Nicolae Ceaușescu, who had been angered by the Romanian service broadcasts.³ Carlos and his associates had reportedly been paid \$1 million by the Romanians. The powerful bomb was estimated to consist of about 30 pounds (around 15 kilograms) of a Romanian-made explosive called nitropenta.

Four RFE/RL employees were seriously injured, and damage to the building exceeded \$2 million. This was the only direct attack ever made on the RFE/RL headquarters building. Glenn Ferguson, the President of RFE/RL, sent out a message to the staff the next morning: “Four of our employees are injured, our building is damaged, but RFE/RL will continue to be heard.”

3 For a detailed account of the bombing of RFE/RL and the Carlos operation see Richard H. Cummings, *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950–1989* (McFarland, 2009), 92–121. Cummings was Director of Security at RFE/RL at the time of the bombing. In 2016, he published a blog at coldwarradios.blogspot.com entitled *Carlos the Jackal and The Last Tango in Munich: The Bombing of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 21, 1981*, which shows several photos of the bombing and includes vignettes of members of Carlos’ bombing group.

Lynne and I were visiting friends in Normandy when we heard the news. It was a peaceful Sunday morning, there was a light mist drifting through the apple orchard, and we were drinking tea with our hosts when the BBC World Service suddenly announced that the RFE/RL building in Munich had been bombed the previous evening, causing extensive damage and some injuries to personnel. It was a quite a shock. Even though RFE/RL was frequently denounced in the Warsaw Pact media, it had never occurred to me that we might be physically attacked.

Back in Paris, we went on with our work as before, but with a lurking sense of insecurity that was quite new. If RFE/RL could be attacked in Munich, we could easily be a target too. On the sixth floor of an apartment building in St. Germain des Prés, there was little we could do to enhance our physical security, but we were conscious now as never before that we could be the target of Soviet hostility. Mark and Kathy Rhodes began to worry about their young son, Alex, who went by school bus each day to the American School in Paris in the suburb of St. Cloud. Charlie Allen wondered if field work might not be more dangerous than he had bargained for. I don't recall any of the interviewers or organizations we worked with backing away from their commitments, but I'm sure the bombing made it clear to them that what we were doing wasn't a game.

Since Max had set up the Paris office in 1970, we had been in regular touch with the French internal security authorities, the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST). Max had regular lunches with a genial officer named Mr. Pierre Levergeois. When Levergeois retired, he was replaced by Christian Pagès, less exuberant, but equally competent, who had spent several years working in a French industrial plant in the USSR before joining the USSR section of the DST. Unlike Levergeois, Pagès spoke Russian. Most of the time, we had no reason to call on the DST's professional services, but we stayed in regular contact, and it was good to know that someone had our back in case of real trouble.

MAX RALIS RELUCTANTLY RETIRES

Max Ralis had expected Ralph Walter to give him a one-year extension of his mandatory retirement date of June 30, 1981, but that was not what happened. Walter decided that Max should retire on schedule. Max felt he had been betrayed. I tried to get Walter to reconsider, but he was adamant. I don't think Walter wanted a precedent to be set that would impact future retirements in Munich. Max was very angry. Towards the end I think he may have suspected

that I was conspiring with Walter to get rid of him—I already knew I would be Director of SAAOR after Max’s departure—but I wouldn’t have minded him staying on an extra year. Max and I had always gotten along well together. In the past, he had had fallings-out with some of the people who worked for him, including David Anin, George Perry, and Orest Neimanis, but this hadn’t happened with me. He basically left me alone to get on with things, and I didn’t invade his turf. We had complementary interests.

Nothing availed. Walter insisted that Max’s last day in the office would be June 30. No doubt it came down to a simple question of money. Max was on a high pay grade with commensurate housing and other benefits. The office planned a farewell luncheon at the Club Med restaurant in the Paris suburb of Neuilly, and we presented Max with a high-end shortwave radio so he could listen to RL from his new home in Orléans. Max tried to be cheerful, but it was easy to tell that his good humor was forced. His anger against Munich management was plain, and it lasted for the rest of his life. In due course, he filed suit against the Radios in the US for age discrimination, but lost the case, despite investing a considerable amount of his own funds in legal expenses.

It was a sad ending to Max’s long career at RL. After his retirement, he would sometimes call or come up from Orléans for the day, but his visits were few and far between. Living in the provinces, away from his Parisian network of Russian contacts, he was at loose ends. He asked several times if he could do some freelance work for SAAOR, but since he was suing the Radios, that was not on the cards. I had received clear instructions from Munich that I was under no circumstances to employ him. Max died in March 1999, still embittered toward the organization he had served so fruitfully for so long.

STAFF CONSOLIDATION

On July 1, 1981, I became Director of SAAOR. A new team was in the process of forming. Our new staff members, Charlie Allen and Mark Rhodes, were getting used to the work of the office. Nicole Kostomaroff continued to handle administrative matters, and Patricia Leroy served as our reports editor. Later in the year, we were joined by two new hires. Kathleen Neveski and Dawn Plumb had both interned at RFE/RL that summer, and I interviewed them both in bucolic surroundings in Munich beer gardens. Kathy was an MA graduate of the Harvard University Soviet Union Program (where she had known Charlie). She spoke Russian and Ukrainian, and had a special interest in the non-Russian

nationalities of the USSR. She had worked as an archivist at Harvard's Ukrainian Institute.

Dawn had a Master's Degree in International Communications and Soviet Regional Area Studies from the University of Washington. She had made three different study trips to the USSR to study Russian language and culture at the University of Leningrad, and had held a teaching assistant position in Mass Communications at the University of Washington. Both candidates came highly recommended by Keith Bush, who had overseen their internships. Their divergent fields of interest enhanced considerably SAAOR's analytical capability.



Nicole Kostomaroff, Paris office manager, in many ways the heart and soul of the operation.

POLITICAL CHANGE IN FRANCE CAUSES TEMPORARY CONCERN

François Mitterrand was elected President of France on May 10, 1981. He was the first Socialist President of France and his campaign had been based on the "Common Program" forged between the French Communist Party and his own Socialist Party.⁴ His cabinet included four members of the Communist Party. We naturally wondered what this might mean for future operations in France.

Shortly after I became Director of SAAOR, I had lunch with our contact at the DST, the man we knew as Christian Pagès. These lunch meetings were a quarterly event. We met at La Ferme Saint Simon, an excellent Michelin one-star restaurant near our office. One never talked business in France during the main part of the meal, but as we launched into dessert, I delicately asked Monsieur Pagès what the election of President Mitterrand might mean for our office and, in general, for French relations with the USSR. Pagès leaned over and put his

4 While the inclusion of Communists in the government was greeted with trepidation by the Reagan administration, it actually led to the decline of the French Communist Party, which was now boxed in and could no longer play its traditional opposition role. The Communists left the government in 1984, and their presence in the French political landscape has gradually diminished.

hand on mine and said, “Now we are finally going to get serious about what the Soviets are doing on our territory.” He explained that the government of President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing had been reluctant to crack down on Soviet espionage activities in France, giving as an example a case in which Soviet agents caught red-handed spying at the Paris Air Show had been let off scot-free. He assured me that our office had nothing to worry about.

It took the French a while to take action, but when they finally made their move they stopped the show. Returning from a ski vacation in the Alps in April 1983, my family and I dropped into a country restaurant for lunch. Glancing at a French newspaper lying on the bar, I saw a large headline announcing that the government had just expelled 47 Soviet officials.⁵ So that was what Pagès meant about getting serious! The expulsion made headlines round the world.

Pagès was right about our office as well. We never had any problems with the Mitterrand government and nothing happened to upset the course of our regular quarterly lunches.

NEW INTERVIEW SITE IN COPENHAGEN

Charlie had been getting a feel for the interviewing by reviewing and coding questionnaires from the field. We had just begun to work with an institute in Copenhagen called Opinion and Media Research (OMR), directed by Prof. Steen Sauerberg of the University of Copenhagen. The institute had previously worked for EEAOR, but had broken off the relationship the preceding year, after Sauerberg was mentioned by name in a Swedish press article attacking RFE interviewing in Sweden and Denmark. I contacted the director of EEAOR to see if he had any objections to our working with Sauerberg, and got the green light. RL interviewing had a much lower profile, and was less likely to come to the attention of the press. Sauerberg was willing to train the Russian-speakers in his interviewing team to do field work for SAAOR.

Establishing a working relationship with an experienced institute in Copenhagen was a major step forward. Denmark attracted a good deal of Soviet tourist traffic. OMR conducted a pilot study of 85 interviews in the late summer and early autumn of 1981. Although they showed an unusually high rate of listening to Western radio, and there was a certain amount of confusion between different

5 An account of this incident can be found in an article by John Vinocur in the *New York Times* of April 6, 1983: “47 Soviet Officials Expelled by Paris on Spying Charges.”

stations, by and large the pilot was a success. The interviews would not be added to the database for the time being, and the problems would be dealt with by means of additional training.

Charlie and I made our first field trip to Copenhagen in October 1981. We met the interviewers at Steen Sauerberg's apartment, which also served as his office. There were about eight interviewers present. Charlie and I divided them up into two groups to talk with them, and get a feel for what they might bring to the project. After the meeting, I left for Helsinki, while Charlie stayed on in Copenhagen for a week to observe the interviewers in action.

The best place to find Soviet visitors, Charlie discovered, was a group of stores owned and run by Polish emigrés in the Store Kongensgade area. In some instances, the store owners cooperated with Sauerberg's interviewers by letting them know when Soviet tourists would be there, and one of them would even make an office available if required. The stores had Russian-language signs in the windows to entice Soviet travelers. They offered cheaper prices on electronic goods than the larger department stores, though the latter were popular with ladies looking for cosmetics. The interviewers had a range of different techniques for approaching Soviet travelers and conducting informal interviews. Charlie noted that those who had worked on the RFE project were particularly skilled.

THE ISRAEL PROJECT

Although I had handled most of the emigrant interviewing in Rome, Max had dealt with the project in Israel on his own. When he retired, I took over. Operations in Israel fell into three major categories: interviewing recent emigrants on their foreign radio listening behavior; locating reviewers for RFE-RL broadcasts in the Baltic, Belorussian, Ukrainian, and Tajik languages; and obtaining background information from sources who were knowledgeable about more or less anything: Soviet jamming, penal camps, food availability... It was all grist to the mill.

Before he retired, Max made one last trip to Israel to lay the groundwork for his departure. He met with the coordinator of the research project, Eleonora Poltinikova, and with interviewers in Tel Aviv, Rehovot, and Beersheva. One of them was Ariel Cohen, who had immigrated from the USSR in 1976 at the age of 16, and who I later invited to intern in our Paris office. I had hoped to visit Israel to coordinate future plans with Poltinikova, but my trip had to be delayed until the following year.

In his handover memo to me, Max noted that care had always been taken to keep interviewing under the radar. Although he had established good relations with several leading personalities in the Soviet emigrant community, he had avoided meeting representatives of Israeli intelligence. The latter were of course aware of our research and had interrogated some of Max's contacts about eight years previously. In 1973, Max had had an amicable meeting with the head of the East European section of the Foreign Ministry. He had explained the nature of our research and shown that it did not conflict with Israeli interests. He passed on our study of Soviet reactions to the 1973 war. It was tacitly agreed that our research could continue. A verbal agreement concerning staff hiring for Radio Liberty was also reached.⁶

ANALYSIS EXPANDS TO COVER OPINION RESEARCH

With a new team of four analysts, the scope and relevance of our reporting increased. We were able to put out many more reports, covering public opinion as well as listening behavior.

Exploration of public attitudes to certain current events produced some interesting results. An analysis of Soviet citizen reactions to Solidarity and the imposition of martial law in Poland revealed a majority of negative attitudes to the Polish unrest.⁷ Another study compared attitudes to Sakharov derived from SAAOR data with attitudes derived from an unofficial Soviet poll and produced remarkably similar results.⁸ We also investigated attitudes toward the right to strike.⁹ It turned out that the average Soviet citizen had a poor understanding of the right to strike, at least in Western democratic terms. In their minds strikes were linked with anarchy and disorder, and they were consequently opposed by half the respondents. Another forty percent held no opinion, and only about one in eight favored the right to strike. This was something that Western broadcasters needed to take into account when discussing strikes, especially when reporting on events in Poland.

6 Memo from Ralis to Parta, "Field Trip to Israel, 17-25 June 1980," 18 July 1980, HIA.

7 Charles Allen and staff, "Developing Soviet Citizen Attitudes toward Poland," AR 8-81, January 1981, HIA.

8 R. Eugene Parta and Mark S. Rhodes, "Attitudes of some Soviet Citizens to Andrei Sakharov: Comparison of SAAOR Data with Unofficial Soviet Poll," AR 11-81, December 1981, HIA.

9 R. Eugene Parta, "Attitudes in the USSR Toward the Right to Strike," AR 1-81, January 1981, HIA.

In the area of radio listening behavior, we issued two trend reports on RL's audience reach, based on the MIT simulation; two analyses of listening behavior, one based on citizen data and one on emigrant data; and a study of Soviet citizens' information sources that compared Soviet domestic media with Western radio.¹⁰ In 1981 jamming was reinstated on VOA, BBC, and Deutsche Welle after having been lifted during the period of détente in the 1970s, and we took a look at the impact of renewed Soviet jamming on Western broadcasts to the USSR.¹¹

1982

USSR Events

Yuri Andropov positions himself to take over from the ailing Brezhnev.

- January: Rumors of corruption and scandal in entourage of ageing Brezhnev.
- January: Death of CPSU Second Secretary Mikhail Suslov. Succession battle between Kirilenko, Chernenko, and KGB chief Andropov.
- March: Brezhnev hospitalized.
- May: Andropov leaves KGB, replaces Suslov as Second Secretary of CPSU.
- November: Brezhnev dies.
- November: Andropov elected General Secretary of CPSU.

At the beginning of 1982, SAAOR was humming along well, with a larger staff and an increased report output. We had a good working relationship with Munich management in the persons of RFE/RL Director Glenn Ferguson and Executive Director for Programs and Policy Ralph Walter. But change was on the horizon. A power struggle was underway at the head of the Soviet political apparatus, and the Radios too were about to be plunged into turmoil. By the end of the year, the landscape had altered completely.

Ronald Reagan had been elected President of the United States in November 1980, and by 1982 his administration was set firmly on a more conservative course, with the aim of actively promoting democracy around the world, and taking a more muscular stand against communism. As part of this policy, the budget for international broadcasting was increased—which was good news—but in

¹⁰ R. Eugene Parta and Mark S. Rhodes, "Information Sources and the Soviet Citizen: Domestic Media and Western Radio," AR 1-81, June 1981, HIA.

¹¹ Mark S. Rhodes, "The Impact of Soviet Jamming on Western Broadcasts to the Soviet Union," AR 10-81, December 1981, HIA.

the course of the year, the Radios' oversight and management bodies both veered in an openly more hard-line direction. Contrary to previous upheavals, the existence, location, and modus operandi of SAAOR did not come under question during these changes, and we continued to fulfil our mission regardless of turbulence in Washington and Munich.

THE SAAOR TEAM

By 1982, SAAOR's new team of seven highly-qualified staffers was able to fulfil a comprehensive mandate that included regularly measuring the size of Radio Liberty's audience and comparing it to that of other major Western broadcasters to the USSR. We determined the demographic characteristics and listening habits of the audience. We assessed how RL influenced the opinions of its listeners. We reported on reception conditions (audibility and jamming). We provided a monthly summary of direct quotes from individual RL listeners describing their listening experience. We surveyed the views of the Soviet population on the affairs of the day. We furnished background information on life and events in the USSR. We evaluated RL programming by means of panel reviews conducted with recent emigrants from the Soviet Union.

Reports on all these topics were put together by one or more analysts, subjected to a thorough editing process, circulated through the whole office for peer review, returned to the editor for final modifications, and ultimately sent to Munich for distribution inside and outside the Radios. (In a more light-hearted vein, the peer review procedure also served for the staff's own occasional literary endeavors, which included the prescient *Andropov Diaries* and the unfinished Office Novel.)

The office functioned as a tightly knit team. Opinions might differ, but internal discord was rare. We were all much of an age, we had similar interests and goals, and we enjoyed each other's company. As Mark once said, the office was a good place to hang out. On two occasions, Lynne and I invited the whole staff for the weekend, the first time to a country house near Honfleur in Normandy that we rented year-round (except when the owner returned for a summer break), the second time to an apartment in Verbier (Switzerland) that we had recently purchased. Spouses were welcome, and later children came too. We walked, talked, drank, and ate, and forged bonds that in many cases still endure four decades later.



The SAAOR staff at our apartment in Verbier, Switzerland for a weekend of fun, relaxation, and raclette in October 1985.

INTERVIEWING SOVIET TRAVELERS

Although the number of interviews reaching SAAOR had increased significantly, not much else had changed since we had introduced our basic survey research methods twelve years earlier. It was still impossible to access the population of the USSR in-country with traditional survey methods, and SAAOR still employed the best available substitute: interviewing Soviet travelers temporarily in the West.¹²

In the 1970s and early 1980s, travel to the West was highly selective and strictly supervised. Often it was organized through the workplace, and a trip was sometimes awarded as a reward for good performance. In 1976, according to Soviet sources, a total of 535,000 Soviet citizens visited 15 Western countries. The number seems high, but a lot of these visitors were probably traveling for professional reasons. The figure would have included sailors on Soviet ships that called in at Western ports. The Soviet data did not indicate who was traveling on busi-

¹² Much of the following material appeared in R. Eugene Parta, "Audience Research in Extremis: Cold War Broadcasting to the USSR," published in the UK publication *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, Volume 8, Issue 1 (May 2011). It was based on a presentation I gave at a conference at St. Hugh's College, Oxford University in September 2010.

ness and who was engaged in tourism, but SAAOR's traveler sample for the period 1978-1981 breaks down fairly evenly at 50:50. Of 5,315 respondents interviewed during that period, tourists traveling in groups accounted for 43%, while a further 9% were tourists traveling alone (often to visit a relative in the West). In the professional category, 23% were traveling on business, 11% were students, 8% belonged to sports teams, orchestras, or various artistic groups, and 5% traveled regularly to the West for their jobs (airline personnel, sailors, truck drivers).

How did we make contact with these travelers? Soviet visitors almost always traveled in groups that were supervised by both Soviet and local tour guides. Even though they were usually given free time for shopping and sightseeing, they tended to move round in groups of three or more. Gaining access to individuals and persuading them to talk freely required both planning and ingenuity. Sometimes a contact was made at meetings of various friendship groups. In Paris, Charlie Allen frequently accompanied the interviewer VS to concerts and other events at France-URSS, the French-Soviet friendship society, and saw how easy it was to start up conversations with Soviet visitors there. The friendship society was a good source of contacts, and our interviewer ADM also went there regularly.

Sometimes interviewers could rely on the assistance of local tour guides to make contact with Soviet visitors, and sometimes they struck up conversations in stores catering specifically to Soviet travelers. Observing the interviewer CHVS chatting to a Soviet shopper in one of the Polish stores in Copenhagen, Charlie found himself unexpectedly waved over and introduced to the respondent as "Alek, a Pole who speaks Russian well." CHVS proceeded to ask what "Alek" thought of the atmosphere in Poland after the imposition of martial law. Blind-sided, Charlie managed to mumble something about everyone understanding that excessive rhetoric was in no one's interest. CHVS then smoothly switched the conversation to radio broadcasts, and began to discuss BBC and VOA. For Charlie, the incident was nerve-racking (fortunately no one tried to test his Polish), but it afforded an excellent opportunity to watch an interviewer display his skills and turn a conversation in the desired direction.

Another technique was the one devised by our main interviewer in Greece, Christopher Geleklidis, whose translation office was a fixture in the port of Piraeus. His office was a refuge for friends, clients, and visitors. The ground-floor café would send up snacks and hot drinks to his fourth floor office, and he sometimes brought out a bottle of Metaxa brandy. Walking round Piraeus and Athens with Geleklidis on his first visit to Greece, Charlie saw right away that he was The Man. With his distinctive swagger and penetrating voice, you knew when he was

around. He had a bluff, outgoing manner, everybody knew him, and all the Soviet visitors in need of special assistance or translations washed up at his door. He was ideally placed to interview Soviet travelers, and oversee additional interviewers as our operations expanded.

HOW THE INTERVIEWERS WORKED

Our basic interview methods had not changed much since 1970, but a number of refinements had been added over the years. Interviews were now conducted under the auspices of public opinion research institutes. The project was designed as a study on overall media consumption in the USSR, with Western radio presented as one option among many. The questionnaire was station-neutral, meaning that Radio Liberty, BBC, VOA, and the other stations were given identical weight, and the interviewer was unaware of any special interest on the part of a single broadcaster. Pre-announcement of each interview by telephone was required whenever possible so that the institute could carry out random checks of the interviewer's work. Our interviewers were trained to gather information by means of an informal conversational technique that set the respondents at ease, and allowed questions on Western radio listening to be brought into the conversation in the context of a general exchange on media use.

Interviewers were instructed to choose respondents from varied demographic backgrounds, though the requirement was sometimes difficult to enforce. Most of the travelers in our sample fell into one of four occupational categories: engineers, technicians, blue-collar workers, and office workers. Russians were over-represented, as were Estonians, Armenians, Georgians, and Latvians. Inversely, Ukrainians, Kazakhs, Tatars, and Uzbeks were under-represented. We assumed that potential travelers would be screened for loyalty to the regime, and this was borne out by the presence in the dataset of a far higher number of CPSU members than in the adult population at large (25% to 9%). Still, the large tourist contingent increased the presence in the overall sample of non-Party members and women.

The interviewers were generally citizens of the Western European country where the interview was taken, and were able to speak with the respondents in their own language, usually Russian. Close field supervision was exercised at all levels. Interviewers were questioned about their output, and the work of individual interviewers was systematically compared with that of their colleagues to check on consistency and plausibility. At the end of our questionnaire was a

metadata page requesting information on how the interview had been conducted and how the respondent had reacted to the questions. Interviewers were instructed to fill it out as soon as the interview was completed.

An analysis of metadata from 1,514 interviews conducted in 1981 showed that initial contacts were usually made either in a public place or at a public or professional function, although the interview itself often took place in a more private setting. Around half of the interviews were conducted while walking in the street, driving, or sight-seeing. About a quarter took place in restaurants or cafés. In general, the interviewer would attempt to question the respondent in a one-on-one situation. Only about a quarter of the interviews were conducted with other Soviet citizens present, and in most of these cases the interviewers felt that respondents were not inhibited by the presence of a non-speaking compatriot. The average duration of an interview was about an hour, although this usually included discussion of topics other than radio listening. Over 90% of the interviews were conducted in full. Reasons given for non-completion were usually lack of time or third-party interruption of the conversation. In about 80% of cases, interviewers believed the information given them to be true. Regarding the other 20%, it was usually felt that respondents were holding back information, rather than giving false information. The refusal rate for interviews was about 15%.

CROSS-CHECKING THE DATA

One method of cross-checking the data was to compare results from different interview fields. A method of Comparative and Continuing Sampling had originally been developed by our opposite numbers at EEAOR to validate their work with travelers from the Eastern European countries of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania.¹³ The methodology was applied to the Soviet traveler survey starting in the late 1970s. Data from different sampling points was analyzed for internal consistency before being included in analysis. A chi-square test was applied to subsets of the data from different geographic areas to determine the statistical consistency of data gathered from each area. If the results were inconsistent, the data would be thoroughly examined and possibly excluded from analysis. The purpose was to ensure that travelers to each sampling point belonged,

13 "The Method of Comparative and Continuing Sampling," Audience and Public Opinion Research Department, Radio Free Europe, Munich, January 1976, HIA.

so to speak, to the same universe, and that the findings were not impacted by either local differences in interviewing conditions nor trends over time.

The sixty-four thousand dollar question was this: Did Soviet citizens who traveled abroad consume media in the same way as those who stayed at home? Hypotheses worked both ways. On the one hand, travelers might be assumed to come from a more intellectually curious segment of the population who took more interest in events abroad, and were more active radio listeners. On the other hand, if the trip had been taken for professional purposes or granted as a reward for good work, this was less likely to be true. Bearing in mind that travelers were presumably screened for political reliability, this might make them reluctant to discuss with a foreigner such ideologically dubious activities as foreign radio listening... It was impossible to know to what extent all these potential biases cancelled each other out.

EMIGRANT INTERVIEWING

By 1982, SAAOR was interviewing about 1,000 recent emigrants from the USSR each year. Most of the interviews took place in either Rome or Israel. Most of the respondents were contacted within the first few weeks of their arrival in the West, and no interviews were conducted with emigrants of more than three months' standing. Data from the emigrant sample continued to be kept separate from citizen data. Emigrant interviews were never used for audience estimates. Their utility lay elsewhere.

When interviewing emigrants, we were able to solicit views on sensitive topics that could not be raised with citizen respondents. We openly used a printed questionnaire, and we asked more detailed questions. Emigrants could be asked for their opinions on specific RL programs.¹⁴ These "ratings" were eagerly awaited by Russian-service staffers, and occasionally gave rise to arguments between programmers and management. Programmers whose shows were not widely heard might argue for better time slots, for instance. Emigrants could also provide more detailed information on the technical aspects of RL's broadcasts, such as audibility and jamming, which was of great value to RL's technical staff. In 1982 SAAOR began issuing reports on jamming and audibility issues based on emigrant data.¹⁵

14 Mark Rhodes, "RL Listening Patterns and Program Reactions Jan-June 82: Emigrant Data," AR 8-82, October 1982, HIA.

15 Mark Rhodes, "Comparative Audibility of Major Western Broadcasters to the USSR: Nov 81-Aug 82," AR 7-82, October 1982, HIA.

FIELD TRIP TO ISRAEL

In March 1982, I paid my first visit to Israel, one of our main centers of emigrant interviewing. Lynne had been to Israel several years earlier with a tour group but I hadn't been able to join her, and Max had handled our work in Israel up until now. My excitement grew as the plane descended towards the Israeli coast through a clear blue sky. Eretz Israel! I had been a staunch supporter of Israel during its short history, and I was eager to see it for myself. I had got myself a second passport for the trip, knowing that Israeli stamps might bar me from other countries. I picked up my rental car, and set off for Zikhron Ya'akov, south of Haifa, to meet with our Israeli coordinator, Eleonora Poltinikova.

Eleonora and her husband, Avram Shifrin, lived in a small house at the bottom of a hill. A woman stopped me on my way through the town, asked if I was looking for Shifrin, and pointed down the road towards the house. An obvious foreigner in a rental car—where else would I be going in such a small town?! I arrived at dinner-time. After the meal, I went to the synagogue with Avram and his young son. The boy was wearing an American cowboy outfit with holster and cap gun. He and the other lads walked round the synagogue firing off their cap guns. No women or girls were there. I was bemused. Avram explained that Purim was under way, and that it was normal during the festival to let the boys play in the synagogue.

Next morning Eleonora and I went over the interview procedure, and I explained the new questionnaire we were putting into the field. We agreed to meet later in the week at an Absorption Center for new immigrants (*ulpan*) so I could watch interviews being conducted, and then I headed back to Jerusalem. I asked Avram if it would be safe to take the route down the West Bank via Nablus so I could see something of the countryside. He assured me that the Israelis were in full control, and I had nothing to fear. I set off for Jenin, where a tough tank battle had been fought during the Six Day War, and then went on to Nablus. The scenery was spectacular. What you don't grasp by looking at a map is that the West Bank is hilly country. I could see right over to the Mediterranean across the strip of flat land below which was Israel proper. Obviously the Israelis would want to hold on to the area for strategic reasons.

But the atmosphere in Nablus was distinctly eerie. There were a lot of people just standing around, and they all stared hard at my Israeli plates. I inched my way through the crowds, making sure I kept moving. Just outside the city, I saw a sign pointing to Jacob's Well that was mentioned in the Bible. I thought about turning off and going to see it, but it was getting late, and the area had an omi-

nous feel. I kept on going. By the time I got to Ramallah, it was foggy. I made a wrong turn, and found myself lost outside of town. It was getting late and I was starting to get nervous. Creeping slowly forward through the fog, I came to a hospital with a guard out front. I stopped and said hopefully, "Jerusalem?" He smilingly replied "Ivrit?" Did I speak Hebrew? "No," I said. He showed me which way to go, and I found my way back to the highway. Nothing had happened, but I sensed it had been unwise to drive alone through the West Bank in an Israeli-registered car. It didn't seem quite as safe as Avram had claimed.

Eleonora had reserved a hotel for me in Jerusalem. I had asked for the mythical King David Hotel beside the Old City walls, but Avram said I didn't want to stay there, and recommended a new hotel where he knew the manager and could get me a special rate. It turned out to be a modern high-rise hotel overrun by American tourists. I was in Jerusalem, but I could have been anywhere. I stayed one night, and then moved to the Hilton on the Mount of Olives. It was located in the Palestinian part of the Old City, and I seemed to be the only American there, which suited me fine. When I arrived, a Palestinian wedding was being celebrated. It was colorful and noisy, and pleasantly atmospheric. For the rest of my stay the hotel was quiet, and I was given what felt like special treatment. The hotel had been built by King Hussein of Jordan before it fell into Israeli hands during the Six Day War. It offered a magnificent view of the old walled city and the Dome of the Rock, and was a good base for walks on the Mount of Olives.

My main reason for being in Jerusalem was to meet Victor Grayevsky, the director of Kol Israel. Grayevsky had been born in Poland and in 1956, as a journalist for the official Polish Press Agency (PAP), he had been responsible for getting Khrushchev's secret speech out to the West.¹⁶ He left for Israel in 1957. He was one of the 30,000 Jews who had been forced out of their jobs by the communist leader Wladyslaw Gomulka after the political upheavals of October 1956 (see vignette in Appendix 2).

Victor and his wife Anna took me out to dinner. Anna had waded ashore at Haifa shortly after the end of World War II, when her boatload of Romanian immigrants was denied entry to British-mandated Palestine and intentionally beached. She had been interned by the British before being granted the right to live in what was then Palestine. Both of them thought it odd that I should choose

¹⁶ General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev gave an unprecedented speech denouncing Stalin's crimes to a closed session of the CPSU Twentieth Party Congress in Moscow in February 1956. See Appendix 2 for a more detailed vignette of Grayevsky and the way in which he got hold of the Khrushchev speech.

to stay on the Palestinian side of Jerusalem, but I explained that I was avoiding American tourists. We dined at the Mishkenot Sha'ananim conference center, a small international campus for writers and intellectuals with a stunning view of the city walls. Saul Bellow had stayed there while writing *To Jerusalem and Back*. I asked for a typical Israeli drink as an aperitif, and they ordered me sabra liqueur and orange juice.

Next day, Victor and I worked out a plan for SAAOR to share data on Kol Israel's broadcasts to the USSR, and he invited me to dinner at "the best restaurant in Jerusalem"—his home! He wasn't wrong about the food. Unfortunately, I had nothing to offer my hosts but a bottle of Laphroaig whisky from the duty-free in Paris. Not having planned on giving it away, I had already opened the bottle and taken a very small drink as an antidote to the American tourists. Victor took it in good part, but laughingly insisted that I bring him an unopened bottle on my next visit (which I did). It was the beginning of a long-lasting friendship.

Before I left Jerusalem, Eleonora Poltinikova took me to an Absorption Center where she conducted interviews with recent Soviet arrivals. The *ulpan* was about 15 kilometers from Jerusalem in the direction of Tel Aviv. It was a complex of modern buildings where new emigrants were housed while they learned Hebrew and prepared for life in Israeli society. Eleonora conducted several interviews. Once the purpose of the project had been explained to them, the respondents were eager to participate. They had been keen listeners to Western radio while in the USSR, and wanted to contribute to an effort they saw as vital. I was impressed by the natural manner in which Eleonora made contact with the respondents, and developed a rapport with them. Our project was in good hands.

SOVIET FOOD SHORTAGES

An issue that was often raised spontaneously by emigrant respondents was the problem of food supply in the USSR. As the decade advanced it took on an ever greater importance. An army marches on its stomach, and so does a population. We were hearing more and more complaints about the unavailability of certain items, the length of time spent standing in line at state stores to buy produce of doubtful quality, the high prices in the farmers' markets, and the need for inhabitants of small towns to travel to urban centers like Moscow or Leningrad to buy provisions. One of the jokes circulating at the time ran thus:

Q: What is long and green and smells of sausage?

A: The train from Moscow.

The need to procure food for themselves and their families was coming to dominate the lives of the Soviet people.

Starting in 1981, a section devoted to the food supply was added to the emigrant questionnaire, and in 1982 we began to issue twice-yearly reports comparing average prices and availability of selected items in state stores and farmers' markets all over the country. Although food availability was unreliable in state stores, many food items could be found in the farmers' markets, but at high prices that few people could afford. SAAOR's data on food supply was at a premium. No other organization could furnish this kind of data. Our only competition came from Foreign Service wives at the US Embassy in Moscow, who would sporadically provide impressions gleaned from their local stores and markets. No comparable effort to systematically collect and analyze food-related data existed in the West.

When the project began, these reports were coordinated by Dawn Plumb. In-house, the series was disrespectfully referred to as "El Foodo." Our first report noted evidence of widespread shortages, especially in smaller cities and towns.¹⁷ Meat and dairy products were in especially short supply, and limits on purchases were common. Only vodka seemed to be constantly available.

El Foodo eventually attracted the attention of the Pentagon's internal think-tank, the Office of Net Assessment (ONA), headed by the Washington legend Andy Marshall. One of America's most influential strategists, Marshall directed the ONA from 1973-2015. It was he who pioneered the concept of "net assessment" as a framework for understanding the long-term military competition between the US and the USSR. ONA requested the printing of specific food data tables for their own use, and paid for the computer costs this incurred. ONA's assessments of the worsening food situation in the USSR, which appeared in Congressional studies, were based on data provided to them by SAAOR.¹⁸

RAISING OUR PROFILE

The citizen survey had been underway for twelve years, but our pioneering research work was unknown outside the world of international broadcasting. Ithiel de SolaPool, John Klensin, and I decided it was time to raise SAAOR's pro-

¹⁷ Mark Rhodes and Dawn Plumb, "Food Supply in the USSR: Evidence of Widespread Shortages," AR 2-82, April 1982, HIA.

¹⁸ It has been alleged that ONA tasked SAAOR with carrying out this research, but this was not the case. ONA merely benefited from a program conceived and carried out by SAAOR as part of its emigrant interviewing project.

file by publishing an explanation of our methodology and *modus operandi* in a respected academic journal, in the hope of attracting the interest of a broader public, and increasing our credibility with scholars and other professionals.

I put together a draft outlining our work, and sent it to MIT. Pool and Klensin added in an explanation of the Mostellerization algorithm which we used to project our findings on to the Soviet population. We submitted the article to the academic journal *Communication Research* for peer review. The reviewer expressed his pleasure at SAAOR'S decision to go public, and remarked that hitherto we had been far too hesitant to discuss our operating procedures in public. He requested a few minor additions on interviewer methodology, and then the article was accepted for publication. It appeared in the October 1982 edition of *Communication Research*, and did a lot to enhance SAAOR's reputation in U.S. government and academic circles.¹⁹ Jim Critchlow observed that this was probably the most important paper we had ever issued.

A RIGHTWARD SWING

President Ronald Reagan's conservative Republican administration had adopted a markedly more anti-Soviet stance than its predecessors. Even before Reagan's well-known "Evil Empire" speech of March 1983, characterizing the Soviet Union as "the focus of evil in the modern world," the administration was staking out its positions.

From 1981 to 1985, the Chairman of the Board for International Broadcasting (BIB) was Frank Shakespeare, a staunch anti-communist, who had previously been President of CBS Television, and Director of USIA. Shakespeare was nominated shortly after Reagan took office in January 1981. The BIB was bi-partisan, and in the course of 1982, three Democrats from the Scoop Jackson wing²⁰ of the party were added to the Board. They were Ben Wattenberg, an author and television host; Michael Novak, a sociologist and theologian; and Lane Kirkland, President of the AFL-CIO. All three were committed to taking US international

19 R. Eugene Parta, Ithiel de Sola Pool, and John Klensin, "The Shortwave Audience in the USSR: Methods for Improving the Estimates," *Communication Research*, Vol. 9, No. 4, October 1982, Sage Publications. The "Mostellerization" part of this article can be found in Appendix 3.

20 Henry 'Scoop' Jackson (1912–1983) was an anti-communist Democrat, who supported a hard line against the Soviet Union. He was co-author of the "Jackson-Vanik Amendment" to the Trade Act of 1974 that denied normal trade relations with non-market economies that restricted emigration. The Amendment was intended to facilitate Jewish emigration from the USSR.

broadcasting in a specifically more confrontational direction. All of these dignitaries came to visit SAAOR in Paris, where each expressed their support for our operation. Most memorable was the visit by Lane Kirkland, who let it be known when offered a glass of wine to accompany the buffet luncheon in our office that his beverage of choice was Wild Turkey bourbon. Since our store cupboard was bare, someone had to run over to the Monoprix on Rue de Rennes and pick up what was needed. On another occasion I met another board member, James Michener, a reputed author of historical best-sellers, for breakfast at the Hotel Lutétia, which had been the headquarters for the Abwehr, German military intelligence, during World War II. Michener expressed strong interest in SAAOR's work, and autographed a copy of his book *Poland* for me.

Since the BIB had been created in 1973, its relations with RFE/RL and the RFE/RL corporate board had not always been harmonious. In 1978, the so-called Pell Amendment²¹ had proposed eliminating the independent RFE/RL board and making the government-funded BIB sole overseer of RFE/RL.²² The BIB would have exclusive authority to determine policy and appoint management. Strongly opposed by RFE/RL's corporate board and some members of Congress, the Amendment was exhumed by the Reagan administration and passed in August 1982.

Frank Shakespeare, an able bureaucratic maneuverer, swung straight into action. As soon as the Pell Amendment was passed, he fired President Glenn Ferguson and Executive Vice President Ralph Walter. The hard-core Reaganites believed that RFE/RL had become too "accommodationist" toward its broadcast area, and that a more energetic confrontational stance was needed. "Accommodationist" was not the word that came to mind to describe Ralph Walter, but the Reagan people wanted a new team at the Radios to spearhead their anti-communist policies, and they got their way.

Since SAAOR reported to Walter, we were directly affected by this change. On the day he was notified of his termination, Walter called me to explain what had happened. He said that he could not have worked with the hardline approach of the new regime, and that it was better this way. The new management team was to be headed by James L. Buckley as President of the Radios. Buckley, a former senator from New York, was currently a Counselor to the State Department.

²¹ The Amendment was originally introduced by Senator Claiborne Pell (D, Rhode Island).

²² For a detailed discussion of the history of the Pell Amendment see Mickelson, *America's Other Voice*, 189–194.

His brother, William F. Buckley, was a well-known conservative, and founder-editor of the conservative magazine *National Review*. My first reaction was one of dismay. I didn't want to see the Radios identified with a hardline conservative ideology. I was partially reassured when Buckley chose Jay W. Gildner as Senior Vice President in charge of administration. Gildner had been born in Iowa, and graduated from the University of Minnesota. He had been an assistant Press Secretary to John F. Kennedy, done a stint with USIA, and was now a career diplomat of the highest rank in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Another of Shakespeare's key appointments was George Bailey, who was named Director of Radio Liberty. Bailey was an American career journalist, who had spent much of his life in Germany. He had worked as executive editor of *The Reporter* magazine²³ and as a foreign correspondent for ABC News. Bailey had ties to the Berlin right-wing publisher Springer Verlag, which I found disturbing, and he was also close to Vladimir Maximov, founder and editor of the Russian nationalist journal *Kontinent*.

The BIB did not replace James Brown as Director of RFE, but Brown rapidly became disillusioned with the direction the Radios were taking, and resigned early in 1983. He was replaced by George Urban, a conservative intellectual of Hungarian origin, who had left Hungary in 1948, and had formerly worked for both the BBC and RFE. Urban held strong anti-communist views and was later to claim that "Shakespeare, Bailey and I cleaned out the *detenteniks* from RFE."²⁴

The RFE and RL broadcast services were now headed by what came to be known around the organization as "the two Georges." The Radios were headed into a period of turmoil. While the Reagan administration was a welcome source of additional funding, and was subsidizing a much-needed modernization program, the stronger anti-communist line brought in by hardline political appointees was to cause considerable upheaval.

LET POLAND BE POLAND?

Poland had been placed under martial law on December 13, 1981, and in January 1982, the Reagan administration had endorsed a television show entitled "Let Poland be Poland." The aim of the program was to show American solidarity with

²³ *The Reporter*, founded in 1949, was an influential journal that took a hawkish position on the Cold War.

²⁴ Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*, 174.

the Polish people. These pro-Polish sympathies were unfortunately not shared by Soviet citizens, as was made amply clear by SAAOR's reporting later in the year.

We issued one report on Soviet attitudes toward the Solidarity movement,²⁵ and another on Soviet reactions to martial law.²⁶ Overwhelmingly, Soviet citizens saw the Polish events as a threat. Only 15% of respondents held positive attitudes toward liberalization in Poland, while 71% were negative. Soviet agitprop and media had apparently succeeded in capitalizing on the population's mistrust of strikes as a sign of societal disorder, and exploiting their fears for the security of the Soviet bloc, and their latent anti-Polish attitudes. Radio Liberty listeners were somewhat more favorable to Polish liberalization than listeners to other Western radios, but non-listeners were almost unanimous in rejecting it.

1983

USSR Events

Relations between superpowers worsen throughout the year.

Andropov's attempts at internal reform hampered by illness.

- March: Reagan demonizes USSR as "Evil Empire."
- March: Reagan announces SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative – also known as "Star Wars") missile shield.
- August: Gorbachev emerges as Andropov's heir apparent.
- September: Korean Airlines Flight 007 shot down by Soviet warplane.
- November: Andropov fails to attend 1917 commemoration ceremonies.
- November: NATO "Able Archer" exercises in Western Europe.
- November: First US Pershing missiles installed in UK and West Germany. First Soviet SS-20 missiles installed in Czechoslovakia and East Germany.
- December: START negotiations suspended.

1983 was a tense year that began with President Reagan demonizing the USSR as the "Evil Empire," and ended with both NATO and the Warsaw Pact installing intermediate range nuclear missiles in Europe. Matters were not helped by the

25 Mark S. Rhodes, "Attitudes of some Soviet Citizens to the Solidarity Trade Union Movement: Comparison of SAAOR Data with Unofficial Soviet Poll," AR 5-82, May 1982, HIA.

26 R. Eugene Parta and Mark Rhodes, "Soviet Citizen Attitudes Toward Poland Since Martial Law: Agitprop, Western Radio and the Evolution of Opinion, AR 6-82, September 1982, HIA.

fact that Yuri Andropov, the new General Secretary, was spending much of his time on a dialysis machine.

SAAOR's research work moved steadily forward, despite the more rightward swing of Munich management. We investigated the extent of religious belief in the USSR, and provided timely feedback on Soviet citizens' reactions to the shooting down of a civilian airliner over Soviet airspace. Soviet media expert Prof. Ellen Mickiewicz visited our office and was impressed by the commitment of our staff and the sophistication of our methodology.

LUNCH WITH THE NEW PRESIDENT

On a cold sunny January day, I had lunch with James Buckley, RFE/RL's new President. Buckley was staying with his old friend Evan Galbraith, the US Ambassador to Paris. I picked him up from the Embassy Residence, and took him to a cozy bistro in the chic seventh arrondissement called La Calèche. Buckley was an ex-Senator and I had expected him to be formal, but his manner was relaxed and friendly. We sat down in the restaurant and examined the menus. Hesitantly, I made a suggestion:

"Mr. Buckley—"

He cut me off. "Name's Jim."

"Right, Jim, since we're in Paris, may I suggest we have a half bottle of wine with our lunch."

He smiled. "Any reason it has to be a half bottle?"

"No, Jim, none whatsoever."

Clearly we were going to get along fine. I ordered a full bottle of Burgundy to go with our lunch, and we drank it all.

Our office had prepared a 12-page briefing book for Jim Buckley which laid out SAAOR's mandate, our place in the organization, how we did our work, and how we reported on it. Buckley was suitably impressed, and asked good questions. It was apparent that he valued an independent audience research operation, that he wanted to be adequately prepared for his new job, and that he didn't want to find himself at the mercy of the new hardline RL and RFE directors (about whom I suspect he had been warned). My initial hesitations about Buckley's suitability to head RFE/RL were laid rapidly to rest. Our political differences never came up in the years we worked together, and he turned out to be one of the strongest moral and financial supporters of SAAOR that I ever had to deal with. We had good personal relations, and he was always interested in SAAOR's out-

put. He read all of our reports and put them to good use when dealing with the “two Georges.” As a Reagan appointee I had expected him to support conservative hardline policies, but this did not appear to be the case. I was impressed by his enlightened and sophisticated approach, especially as he had never worked in the area of international broadcasting before. During the three years of his tenure, he proved adept at managing a complex organization.

RADIO LIBERTY UNDER THE CONSERVATIVE REGIME

With George Bailey as the new head of Radio Liberty, the atmosphere in the Russian Service became more fractious. Factions that had already existed for some years became more marked. Since the mid-1970s, there had been tensions between the older Russian staffers of the postwar generation and the newer, predominantly Jewish recruits who had left the USSR in the 1970s. These tensions went back a long way.

Since the nineteenth century, Russian political thought had been split between the Slavophiles—Russian nationalists who believed that Russia was the chosen nation, that Russian Orthodox were the only true believers, and that Moscow was the Third Rome (i.e. after Rome and Constantinople)—and the Westernizers (*Zapadniki*), who were open to democratic thought and influenced by liberal ideas. Some of the older Russian journalists had nationalist leanings, and these tendencies were tacitly encouraged by Bailey, whose sympathies lay with the kind of conservative, authoritarian approach extolled by Solzhenitsyn, rather than with the democratic, dissident-influenced views of the new arrivals. Bailey’s tolerance of the Slavophiles exacerbated existing resentments. Accusations of antisemitism in the Russian Service began to circulate. US media homed in on the allegedly dubious content of broadcasts financed by the US taxpayer. Bailey was charged with turning the Radio into a forum for Russian nationalists. *Newsweek* claimed that RL had broadcast anti-communist reports, anti-Semitic commentaries, and programs critical of Western-style plurality and democracy.²⁷

Mark Pomar, who was deputy director of the Russian Service during this period, describes these tensions in nuanced detail in his excellent book on Russian service programming at RFE/RL and VOA.²⁸ Pomar makes an important

27 Gene Sosin in his memoir *Sparks of Liberty* goes into this in some detail. Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty*, 177–182.

28 Mark G. Pomar, *Cold War Radio: The Russian Broadcasts of the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books/University of Nebraska Press, 2022), 18–23.

distinction between two different approaches to programming, the “strategic” and the “purist.” The strategic approach viewed broadcasting as a way of piercing the Iron Curtain and ending communist rule. The purist approach emphasized high journalistic standards, a calm and reasonable tone, balanced discussions of political issues and cultural themes, and above all avoidance of gratuitous criticism of the Soviet Union, strident editorial commentary, and direct appeals to the Soviet population to resist communist rule.²⁹

The new team at RL was bent on implementing a more strategic approach, in line with the thinking of the Reagan administration, making a sharp break with what they saw as the more purist approach of the years of détente. Pomar writes:

RL programming about Russian nationalist traditions and conservative thought was enthusiastically heralded by some RFE/RL executives and older émigré broadcasters as the most effective way to defeat communist rule, but reviled by many recent Soviet emigres as dangerous propaganda and a sop to Russian anti-Semites. The fundamental divide between an aggressive stance and a neutral voice was further exacerbated by overall US policy toward the Soviet Union, which in the course of the Cold War, first favored the radio ‘strategists’ in the 1950s, then swung to the ‘purists’ during the period of détente in the late 1960s and 1970s, only to return to the ‘strategists’ in the Reagan years.³⁰

The Radio Liberty that I joined in 1965 was more purist than strategic. I had been comfortable with that.

SAAOR UNDER THE CONSERVATIVE REGIME

None of these upheavals affected SAAOR directly at the outset, especially as we were working out of Paris not Munich. I do recall, though, being asked on a business trip to Washington during the height of the controversy in the press if I had seen any critical response to this more nationalist approach in our interviews with Soviet travelers. I replied that up to that point none had shown up.

In Munich Bailey set up a system of informal Russian program reviews that took place in his office with only the journalist responsible for the broadcast and

²⁹ Pomar, *Cold War Radio*.

³⁰ Pomar, *Cold War Radio*.

the service director present. SAAOR was not invited. The point of the reviews seemed to be to lay down Bailey's new conservative line, and I suspected he didn't want any inconvenient audience research data getting in the way. The new 'strategic' approach appealing to Russian nationalism, pre-communist historical traditions, and Russian Orthodoxy was based on political choice not on data.

Despite my concerns about their approach to broadcasting, I found both Bailey and Urban likeable men. Our personal relations were invariably cordial. Bailey was an old European hand with a rumpled appearance, who spoke several languages and had a droll sense of humor. He was an experienced journalist, and his book *The Germans* had been a top seller. Urban was a European sophisticate with a British upper-class manner. He was highly articulate, spoke in impressively complete complex sentences, and had authored several books. Some years after leaving RFE/RL, he asked permission to include excerpts from our reports in a book he was editing, and I duly gave it.³¹

One of the two Georges' innovations was a Commission to study the organization of RFE/RL's broadcast services and support units, including both documentary and audience research. Apparently the purpose was to clean out the "detenteniks." I suspect they thought SAAOR should be included under that rubric. So much of the Commission's work went on behind the scenes that we were barely aware what it was doing, but I recall a rather strange conversation with Bill Thoma, a retired US military colonel who had been on the staff of the Institute for the Study of the USSR before it was closed in 1972, and was now working for the Commission.

Thoma wanted to know whether we were "running agents in the USSR" either now or in the past. Somewhat startled by the question, I assured him that, to the best of my knowledge, we had never done so. I explained that, while we debriefed travelers to the USSR, and while a few of our interviewers had traveled there privately, we had never instructed them to do so, nor paid their travel expenses, nor even known in advance of their travel plans. I made it clear that SAAOR contracted all its work through established survey research institutes in the West that paid and controlled the interviewers, and that we definitely had no Soviet citizens working for us in the USSR.

I never found out what exactly Thoma was trying to sniff out. At the time he seemed satisfied with my explanations, but he ended up advising George Bailey to

31 George E. Urban, ed., *Social and Economic Rights in the Soviet Bloc*, "Rights Seen From Below," (Brunswick, NJ and Oxford, UK: Transaction Books, 1988), 221-241.

separate SAAOR from RFE/RL and turn it over to an “independent private entity.” The suggestion was seconded by Ed Van Der Rhoer, a retired RL Policy Advisor. Their written recommendation was quietly passed on to me by the BIB staff. Walter Roberts and his colleagues had already stepped in once to preserve SAAOR’s independence, and they were troubled by this new proposal. Like me, they feared that spinning off audience research to some “independent” organization would be a disguised attempt to advance the Bailey-Urban hardline agenda.

Conscious that SAAOR’s mission went beyond supporting the immediate needs of radio broadcasting (specifically in the area of attitudinal research), Roberts asked his colleague Jim Critchlow to carry out a study of the activities of both SAAOR and EEAOR on the lines of the one he had done in 1978, to determine if there was any merit to the Commission’s suggestions, and to prepare a formal report. Critchlow made a trip to Europe in 1984, and published the written report in 1986, after thoroughly briefing the BIB on his return. The report was very supportive of SAAOR’s work.³² In the meantime, RFE/RL management took no action with regard to SAAOR. Neither Buckley nor Gildner ever mentioned to me the Commission’s recommendation, and I can only assume it was rejected. I never saw the Commission’s final report, and I don’t even know if it was ever issued.

RESEARCH WORK ADVANCING

Despite ideological upsets, our work moved steadily forward. Continuing exploration of food availability in the USSR made it clear that the difficult situation noted in 1982 had not improved.³³

The Soviet press had noted that the proportion of Russians in the overall population was decreasing in favor of non-Russians, primarily Central Asians, so we asked our respondents if they felt that this would give more influence to the non-Russians. Only a small percentage felt that this would be the case (8%). Non-Russians (13%) were slightly more optimistic than Russians (5%).³⁴

Two listening trend reports were issued in 1983. It was noted that the resumption of jamming of VOA, BBC and Deutsche Welle in 1980, following the inva-

32 James Critchlow, *RFE/RL’s Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research: Review of Recent Trends*, prepared for the Board for International Broadcasting, Washington, DC., 1986, HIA.

33 Dawn Plumb, with Patricia Leroy, “Food Supply in the USSR: Little Sign of Improvement,” AR 3-83, August 1983, HIA.

34 Kathleen Mihalisko, with Patricia Leroy, “Demographic Evolution in the USSR: Russian and Non-Russian Perspectives,” AR 5-83, December 1983, HIA.

sion of Afghanistan and the rise of Solidarity, had created a more level playing field for Radio Liberty, jamming of which had never halted. RL increased its overall share of the Western radio audience during this period, and moved to second place behind VOA, ahead of BBC, and Deutsche Welle.³⁵

As our computer-driven analysis became more complex, we came to rely more and more on the expertise of Dr. John Klensin, who was now Principal Research Scientist at MIT. In 1981, John had come to Paris to work on exploration of attitudinal questions, and in 1983, he returned to consult on refining the geographic estimates in the audience profile. Our sample was considerably weaker in some geographic areas than others, notably Central Asia and Siberia. Klensin produced improved geographic estimates that served us well for the next several years.

RELIGION FAR FROM DEAD IN USSR

The role of religion in a nominally atheistic state was an obvious topic of interest, and likely to be given more emphasis in RL programming as part of the new leadership team's "strategic" approach. We had begun collecting data on the subject in the 1970s. It was a touchy subject to bring up in an interview, and we had given a lot of thought on how to approach it. We consulted the American social scientist Prof. Seymour Martin Lipset of Stanford University, who suggested approaching the subject obliquely. Instead of posing a direct question, he advised asking about people in the respondent's inner circle. We finally decided on the following wording: "Do you know anyone among your family or close friends who is religious?"

Over a three-year period between 1975 and 1978, more than 4,000 Soviet travelers were asked this question. It was reasoned that the "soft" wording might encourage respondents to speak for themselves, while ostensibly projecting their answers on to a third party or parties. On account of office upheavals during the Buchan-Gudridge tenure of the late 1970s, some time elapsed before we were able to examine the data. In 1983, Kathleen Mihalisko (formerly Neveski) undertook a detailed analysis of the question. The MIT computer simulation was used to project the results on to the Soviet adult urban population and to correct for the demographic biases in the dataset.³⁶

35 R. Eugene Parta, "RL's Audience in the USSR: May 82-Jun 83," AR 4-83, November 1983, HIA.

36 Kathleen Mihalisko and R. Eugene Parta, "Religion in the USSR: Estimates of Current Affiliation," AR 1-83, April 1983, HIA.

Since we had approached a difficult topic in an unorthodox way, we vetted Kathy's draft with a number of specialists in the field.³⁷ The overall response was that our results had face validity and were not inconsistent with other studies that had been conducted.

The results of the analysis were intriguing. Respondents were split evenly down the middle: 47% of our Soviet respondents said "Yes, they knew someone" and 47% said "No, they didn't." Affirmative responses followed a predictable pattern. Older respondents were more likely to say "yes" than younger ones; women were more likely to say "yes" than men; the number of "yes" responses decreased with level of education and membership in the Communist Party. The highest rates of affirmative responses were found in Georgia, Armenia, and Lithuania, and the lowest in the outlying Russian regions. In the RSFSR, the further away from Moscow and Leningrad respondents lived, the lower their rate of affirmative response. The Muslim Central Asian Republics showed a higher than average rate of affirmative response at 53%. In other words, although the CPSU had carried out multiple anti-religious campaigns during the 60 years it had been in power, our study showed that religion was far from dead.

VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FROM SOVIET MEDIA EXPERT

In July, Dr. Ellen Mickiewicz, Dean of the Faculty and Professor of Political Science at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, spent three days at our office. Mickiewicz was a top authority on Soviet media and communications, and had recently published an article entitled "Feedback, Surveys, and Soviet Communication Theory."³⁸ She was the author of several books on Soviet media.³⁹ One of her former students was our analyst Mark Rhodes. Mickiewicz met with several staff members, examined our reports, and studied our methodology. She was familiar with our research output, and she had questions to ask.⁴⁰

37 They were Seymour Martin Lipset of Stanford University, Ljubomir Hajda of Harvard University, David Barrett of the World Christian Encyclopedia, and Alyona Kojevnikov of Keston College, a UK organization dedicated to the study of religion in the USSR.

38 Ellen Mickiewicz, "Feedback, Surveys, and Soviet Communication Theory," *Journal of Communication* (Spring 1983): 95-110.

39 Mickiewicz's works include *Media and the Russian Public*, Praeger, New York, 1981, and *No Illusions: The Voices of Russia's Future Leaders*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

40 Prof. Mickiewicz's report is attached to a memo from Parta to Buckley: "Consultation of Prof. Ellen Mickiewicz with SAAOR, 27-29 July 1983," HIA.

One issue that concerned her was the representativeness of the SAAOR database in terms of the USSR population. The report she wrote after her visit made it clear that her concerns had been mitigated:

Representativeness: “The Soviet travelers are not representative of the Soviet population. However, this need not invalidate the results. I found that the work of the RL analysts for independent validation was thorough and solid... Another method of dealing with the representativeness problem is the sophisticated statistical framework provided by MIT. I was extremely impressed by this relationship and by the continuing upgrading of the capability of RL to project onto the Soviet population the appropriate graphics. The extremely responsive and rapid communication between Paris and Cambridge is an enormous advantage... Finally, the question of representativeness is one that is found widely in survey research on inaccessible populations. In the case of the RL research, it is important to stress the (by now) large N and the extremely interesting attributes of the respondents.... I was struck by the kind of people who figured among the respondents... Such a large group of Soviet citizens is interesting in and of itself...”

Replication of Interviews: “Before visiting RL, I had not understood exactly how the material drawn from one interview could be made comparable to that drawn from another. I realized the interviews were informal or casual and thus suffered from lack of structured continuity. In view of this I did not see how the data could be rendered comparable or systematic. My visit provided me with an understanding of the process, and I was impressed by the latent structure in the interviews. This is a subtle and difficult process to describe, but I am convinced that it works... this part of my visit provided me with the greatest amount of information and increased most my own confidence in the results.”

Personnel: “I have noted above the high level of commitment and expertise I found at the Paris office... Because the possibilities for research are so rich and because the staff is small, might it be possible to add interns?”

The consultation reinforced our confidence in what we were doing, and also pointed us in the direction we should take next. I had long wanted to develop an attitudinal typology of Soviet citizens, and Mickiewicz encouraged me to do this. Her advice came in useful when I set about the task the following year.

As regards interns, we had long relied on outside help to process the questionnaires when we could find it. Part-time helpers in the 1970s had included the son of the emigré literature professor Efim Etkind, and the daughter of an old friend of Max, Esther Leneman, who went on to a career with the French radio station Europe 1. Now, however, we took things a stage further. Ariel Cohen, who was part of our interviewing team in Israel, spent six weeks in Paris in the spring of 1983, and he would return for another six weeks the following year. Interns gradually became a regular part of our team, taking over routine chores such as coding and excerpting questionnaires, and freeing up analysts to do more research and analytical work. In the case of Ariel, it allowed him to get a feel for how the questionnaires he worked on in the field were processed when they got to Paris.

CONFLICTING VERSIONS OF KOREAN AIRLINE INCIDENT

On September 1, 1983, Korean Airlines Flight 007 was shot down by a Soviet fighter jet near Sakhalin Island. All 269 crew and passengers aboard were killed. Several US nationals were among the dead. The plane was on the last leg of its flight from New York to Seoul via Anchorage, Alaska, and it had strayed into Soviet airspace due to a navigational error. The Soviet air defense force mistook it for an intruding US spy plane and shot it down.

It took Soviet media a week to acknowledge that the Korean airliner had been downed by Soviet air defenses. Until September 7, they merely threw out cryptic references to a foreign plane that had violated Soviet airspace. Meanwhile Western radio broadcasts to the Soviet Union provided detailed, factual coverage of the incident. But once Soviet media admitted what had actually happened, the Soviet agitprop machine geared up to mobilize public opinion in support of the official line, which was that the United States had undertaken a deliberate provocation to probe the Soviet Union's military preparedness, perhaps even provoke a war.

Immediately after the incident, SAAOR contacted its field institutes with a battery of questions that all interviewers were instructed to put to their citizen respondents in the course of a normal interview.⁴¹ In the two months that followed, we garnered 274 responses from Soviet citizens on the incident, and pub-

41 See Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 54–57; Kathleen Mihalisko and R. Eugene Parta, “The Korean Airline Incident: Soviet Citizens Learn from Western Broadcasts,” in *Soviet /East European Survey 1983–1984*, edited by Voytech Mastny (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 49–56; and Kathleen Mihalisko, “The Korean Airline Incident: Western Radio and Soviet Perceptions,” AR 4-84, April 1984, HIA.

lished a report shortly afterwards. Following a suggestion made by Ellen Mickiewicz, in cases where a Soviet respondent received both Western and Soviet information on the subject, we asked which one they believed. The Soviet version of events was accepted by 80% of non-listeners to Western radio, but only 18% of Western radio listeners. Over half of the Western radio listeners believed the version of events they heard on Western radio, and another 30% said they didn't know which version to believe.⁴² The relatively large percentage of "don't knows" may have stemmed from the fact that respondents had been exposed to two diametrically opposed versions of the incident, especially in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, which prevented them from drawing any conclusion. What was clear was that the uncertainty they expressed when confronted with opposing versions of events indicated reluctance to take the belated official version at face value.⁴³

LISTENER FEEDBACK FOR VOA

For years, SAAOR had been providing Radio Liberty programmers with comments from each individual listener to the station identified in the interviewing. These were called BALEs, standing for Broadcast Area Listener Evidence, which occasioned a lot of bad office jokes about "balefulness," and so forth. Each BALE report contained listener demographics, time of listening, frequency of listening, programs heard, along with an English translation of any comments made.⁴⁴ In cases where comments were particularly lengthy, a special report called an S-BALE was issued.

In 1983, we reached an agreement with VOA to provide them with the same data, and hired a young American graduate student to come in part-time to translate VOA listener comments. Peter Shinkle had graduated from the University of Virginia in the spring of 1983 with a BA in Russian Language and Literature. Nearly four decades later, he remembers:

Almost all of the translations were written by hand, which could sometimes cause me to spend lots of time trying to interpret the writing. I threw my heart into the translations because I hoped that maybe, just maybe, a critical remark might enable the broadcasters to improve their programs and so nudge the

⁴² See Chart 8 in Appendix 1.

⁴³ Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 55.

⁴⁴ See Appendix 4 for several examples of the computerized BALE reports, which were provided on a monthly basis to RL, VOA, and BBC.

Soviet Union a bit closer to respecting freedom of speech... The office ... was an extraordinary place to work because it was located on an upper floor of a beautiful building on the Boulevard St. Germain... For a kid fresh out of college like me, this set an impossibly high standard for workplace surroundings.⁴⁵

Peter went on to a successful career as a news reporter, most recently at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and he is the author of *Ike's Mystery Man: The Secret Lives of Robert Cutler*, published in 2018.

THE LATVIAN CONNECTION

In June 1983, I met with the Latvian group MPIS (Memento Publication and Information Services) in Stockholm,⁴⁶ and we agreed that they would direct and coordinate interviewing among respondents from the Baltic countries, beginning with Latvians and Estonians, but expanding, when possible, to Lithuanians. My credibility with the Latvian community in Sweden, derived from a 1969 encounter with the Latvian political leader Bruno Kalnins, was still good. MPIS was prepared to recruit, train, and coordinate interviewers in Sweden, West Germany, France, and Great Britain. It was the first time we had attempted to target specific national groups.

Although this project did not grow as much as we had hoped, our ties with the group proved valuable over time. The Latvians in Sweden were well organized. They held weekly Latvian folk-dance gatherings, offered Latvian-language instruction, observed Latvian holidays, and ran a Latvian-language summer camp, which I visited. They maintained connections with Latvians in the USSR, and regularly sent visitors from Sweden to Latvia. I kept in touch with the group until our traveler interview project was wound up in 1990.

TRIPLE A DOUBLE S

In November 1983, the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) held its annual convention in Kansas City. The AAASS was the main Slavic studies annual conference and attracted over a thousand partici-

⁴⁵ Email from Peter Shinkle to Patricia Leroy, 16 July 2020.

⁴⁶ Parta Memo for the Record, with copy to Jay Gildner, "Baltic Area Interviewing Arrangements with MPIS in Stockholm," 22 June 1983, HIA.

pants from academia, government, and members of the general public interested in the field. Its panels ranged from the academic, cultural, and linguistic to the political. Ellen Mickiewicz organized and chaired a panel at the convention on the topic of survey research on the USSR, and Mark Rhodes and I were invited to take part. It was the first time that SAAOR had participated in an AAASS conference, and our panel attracted a lot of interest. Mark and I discussed our interview work and pointed out that the findings of SAAOR studies closely mirrored those of other Western and Soviet social scientists with regard to media use, attitudes to Andrei Sakharov, and opinions of Solidarity.⁴⁷

The other panel participants were Prof. Vladimir Shlapentokh of Michigan State University, who had been a leading sociologist at the Institute of Sociology of the USSR Academy of Sciences before emigrating in 1979, and Prof. James Millar of the University of Illinois. Millar was Principal Research Scientist on the US government-funded Soviet Interview Project (SIP), which interviewed emigrants from the USSR. Most of the interviewing was done in the United States.⁴⁸ SIP had been inspired by the Harvard Interview Project that was conducted in post-war Europe among former Soviets who had remained in Western Europe after the war.⁴⁹

1984

USSR Events

Third elderly invalid named Soviet leader. Fighting intensifies in Afghanistan.

- February: Andropov dies and is replaced by ailing Konstantin Chernenko.
- July: Los Angeles Olympics boycotted by USSR in retaliation for US boycott of Moscow Games in 1980.
- December: Gorbachev pays successful visit to Britain, meets Margaret Thatcher.

In the USSR, increased repression was the order of the day under the infirm and incompetent Chernenko. Reform efforts ceased. Deployment of nuclear missiles by

47 A report we published the following year resumed these findings: Mark Rhodes, "A Study of SAAOR Data Validity: Behavior and Opinion Measurement," AR 5-84, April 1984, HIA.

48 SAAOR never played an active role in the Soviet Interview Project, although Prof. Millar and I met from time to time to discuss our work.

49 Bauer, Raymond, Alex Inkeles et al., *How the Soviet System Works: Cultural, Psychological and Social Themes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).

both the US and the USSR provoked a climate of unease, the food situation remained disturbing, and the war in Afghanistan continued to go badly for the Soviets.

At SAAOR, however, we were forging ahead: taking on new staff, computerizing the office, expanding interviewing, collecting more data, and broadening the range of our analysis. Our methodology was validated by a BIB investigation, but SAAOR's methods of contacting Soviet travelers were called into question by the professional market research organization ESOMAR (European Society of Marketing and Opinion Research).

SAAOR STAFF EXPANDS

As SAAOR activities continued to expand, we took on new staffers to cope with our growing needs. In January, Susan Roehm came in to assist Nicole with the processing and coding of questionnaires. Susan had a BA in Slavic Studies from Barnard College, an MA from the Columbia University Russian program, and a certificate of proficiency in Russian from the Pushkin Institute in Moscow. She was living in Paris with her French husband and her two sons, and she sang in the choir at the American Cathedral. It was there that she encountered a friend of mine, who told me about her Soviet studies background.

In November, Sallie Wise moved to Paris from the Munich Research Department, where she had spent three years as a political analyst. I had met her at Charlie Allen's rather sumptuous wedding party at a château near Paris the year before, and we had discussed the possibility of her coming to work for SAAOR. She had acted as our liaison with RL Research before joining us full time as a research analyst. Her valuable experience as an analyst in Munich greatly strengthened SAAOR's analytical team. Sallie had specialized in Soviet foreign policy at the Research Department in Munich, and her first assignment for SAAOR was to analyze the data we had been gathering since 1980 on attitudes to Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan. She would become our principal analyst tracking growing Soviet disenchantment with the war in Afghanistan for the next five years, and she presented some of these unique findings at outside conferences, including at RAND. Sallie had a BA from Yale in Russian and East European Studies, and was a graduate of the Harvard Soviet Union Program. She had met both Charlie and Kathy Mihalisko at Harvard, and had worked there as a research assistant to Prof. Richard Pipes.

During the summer, Ariel Cohen returned to SAAOR for several weeks, and we also took on an American intern for a few months. Andrew Kuchins came

from Johns Hopkins SAIS, my own alma mater. He later became a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and directed the Carnegie Moscow Center from 2003–2005, before becoming a senior associate at CSIS. Later he was head of the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek where he ran afoul of the Kyrgyz authorities in a trumped-up case that appeared to be an attempt to hinder the University's freedom of operation.

COMPUTERIZING THE OFFICE

Until 1983, we had only one computer terminal. It sat in my office and was used by anyone who needed to access our database at MIT. We communicated with Munich by phone, postal service, or telexes sent via the RFE/RL office on Avenue Rapp. Back then of course there was no e-mail. It was becoming evident that we needed to develop a more advanced computer capability that would benefit the whole office. John Klensin made some recommendations during a stay in Paris, and the Munich computer center sent one of its staffers, Greg Ingleright, to Paris to assess our needs. It was decided to equip the entire office with DEC (Digital Equipment Company) Rainbow personal computer terminals. This was carried out in stages. In the fall of 1983, Nicole Kostomaroff and Patricia Leroy attended a training course at DEC to familiarize themselves with the Rainbows and learn the basics of word-processing, and we went on from there. Six additional Rainbows were purchased in short order.

It was becoming clear that we needed a full-time computer specialist on the staff. In October 1984, we were joined by Roselyn Romberg. She had been recommended by John Klensin, and was the first of our new hires who had no extensive academic background in Soviet affairs, though she had participated in Emerson College's USSR study program in 1976. Roselyn had majored in environmental science at Wesleyan University, and had worked for a while with Klensin in the central computer facility at MIT, before moving to Silicon Valley to work for SORCIM. This was the company that made SuperCalc, and led software development for the Apple Mac when it first came out.

I interviewed Roselyn in Seattle. I was on vacation visiting family there, and she flew up for the day from Silicon Valley. I picked her up at the airport in my brother-in-law's flashy red Honda and we had lunch at Ray's Boathouse, a popular sea-food restaurant. Roselyn came well recommended, and she clearly knew what she was talking about. I decided she would be a good fit for our office's needs and we hired her.

When she arrived in Paris, the Rainbow desktop computers were functioning as stand-alone units, and we had no in-house network. John Klensin had recommended using a DEC Mini-Vax for our office network. Claude Martin, the director of the Munich computer center, signed off on this and sent Ingleright back to Paris. He and Roselyn cabled the Rainbows and a central printer to the Mini-Vax and created an office network. At that point, we discovered that the mini-VAX had only six slots for terminal hookups, and we had eight terminals, but we got the VAX upgraded the following year. Paris was now ahead of Munich in terms of overall computerization. Much of the credit for this goes to Greg Ingleright, who was personally committed to setting up a state-of-the-art computer operation in the SAAOR office.

EXPANDING INTERVIEWING IN EUROPE

As we attempted to expand our traveler database, finding worthwhile interview sites and competent interviewers was a constant preoccupation. In 1984 we explored two promising areas: Hamburg and Vienna.

Hamburg. In March, Charlie made an exploratory trip to Hamburg to meet three contacts whose names he had been given by friends in the Paris emigration. The first was an emigré music professor who had retained good contacts with Soviet artists who came to perform in the West. He was prepared to start interviewing right away. The other two were not in a position to do any interviews themselves, but both offered to help locate potential interviewers. One was a lawyer whose father was a prominent Russian emigré philosopher, and one was a Russo-German who was trying to get his family out of the USSR.⁵⁰

Next, we needed a survey research institute to run the project. Michèle Leroy, the director of Field Service in Paris, gave me an introduction to Gesellschaft für Marktforschung (GfM), a well-known Hamburg market research firm, and in May I went to Hamburg to brief Siglint Tiedemann. I gave Frau Tiedemann a detailed overview of our activities and requirements, and reassured her that we would help with interviewer recruitment. We agreed that GfM should do a pilot study. Dr. Andersen, the director of GfM, was in Cologne on the day of my visit, but he called me two days later to confirm.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Memo from Allen to Parta, "TDY of March 27-29 (Hamburg)," 18 April 1984, HIA.

⁵¹ Parta Memo for the Record, "Telecon with Dr. Andersen of GfM in Hamburg," 17 May 1984, HIA.

In August, Charlie returned to Hamburg and passed on to GfM five questionnaires completed by Goldstein, the music professor. This reassured GfM that the project was valid, and that it would only be a matter of time before they could increase the number of interviews.⁵² Taking a stroll along the port, Charlie found ten Polish-run stores catering to traveling Soviets, similar to those in Copenhagen.⁵³ Hamburg got more commercial traffic than Copenhagen. Some passenger ships stopped off there, and traveler composition appeared to be evenly distributed between sailors, *komandirovki* (business travelers), and ordinary tourists.⁵⁴ By September, Goldstein was providing 5-10 interviews a month of reasonable quality, and GfM had found a local checker who had watched him work and written up an extremely thorough three-page report. Charlie thought it would be possible to recruit more interviewers among emigré Poles and Russians in Hamburg, and perhaps elsewhere in North Germany.

GfM turned out to be useful in other ways, when our institute in Finland, KPR-Marketing, decided to withdraw from the project due to security concerns.⁵⁵ Kari Kiuru, the manager of KPR, had had several run-ins with the KGB over the years. He had once been physically attacked in a Moscow hotel elevator. On another occasion, he had been taken aside for a little “chat” aimed at inducing him to sever all contact with our office. That was in Latvia. It was understandable that he should wish to keep his distance for a while. But Finland was a productive interviewing site, and we didn’t want to lose our interviewers there. We agreed to pay GfM a commission to handle our Finnish interviewers and keep the project afloat.

Vienna. There were plenty of Soviet visitors to Vienna, and I was keen to get a project underway there, but in organizational terms, Vienna was a minefield. It was a major interviewing site for EEAOR, our counterparts at RFE, who worked with an institute called INTORA. When I raised the idea of SAAOR expanding into Vienna with Henry Hart, the director of EEAOR, he was distinctly lukewarm. Hart was not easy to deal with. He had been on poor terms with Max and since Max stepped down, he and I had a somewhat prickly relationship. Since I was anxious not to step on Henry’s toes, it took us nearly two years to get the project off the ground.

52 Memo from Allen to Parta, “TDY of July 30-August 3,” 8 August 1984, HIA.

53 Allen, *ibid.*

54 Memo from Allen to Parta, “TDY of September 3-5,” 7 September 1984, HIA.

55 Letter from KPR-Marketing, 31 May 1984, HIA.

In March 1983, Charlie had held a preliminary meeting with the director of INTORA, Helmut Aigner, to get a feel for his operation. He was in Vienna to meet with interviewers on our emigré project, and the visit to Aigner had been cleared with Hart. Charlie found Aigner very professional. The subject of SAAOR interviewing did not come up.

In August 1984, Charlie returned to Vienna on emigré business, and set up another meeting with INTORA. He found Aigner very well prepared. He had commissioned a study of Soviet tourist traffic which showed that Soviets were pouring into Austria in record numbers by ship, train, and plane.⁵⁶ It turned out that 22 of his East European interviewers spoke Russian. He arranged for Charlie to observe some interviews with Bulgarian respondents. The infrastructure was in place. Aigner clearly wanted the business. But I had agreed with Hart that we would stay out of Vienna for the time being.

The turning-point came a few months later. In January 1985, Aigner came to Paris on a tourist visit with his wife, Christina, and announced outright that he wanted to work for SAAOR. He explained that he had a plan to conduct interviews openly, using the questionnaire. It sounded as though he had already informed Henry Hart, and intended to move ahead with or without Hart's blessing. We were apparently in business.

THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN

While Charlie handled legwork in Europe, I had my sights set on Asia. In June, I flew to Tokyo. I had had my eye on Japan for some time. It could be a promising interviewing field and it would enable us to broaden the geographic spread of our sample. Tourists from Eastern Siberia and the Far East would be more likely to visit Japan than travel to Europe.

I had discussed this with former Executive Vice-President Ralph Walter, who was encouraging, but after he was dismissed from the Radios in 1982, the idea got put on hold. When BIB board member Ed Ney, who was president of the advertising agency Young & Rubicam, came to Paris, I happened to mention that we wanted to explore interviewing in Japan. Ney took up the idea at once and wrote me a letter of introduction to the head of Dentsu, Young & Rubicam Japan. Around the same time, we had a visit from Roman Kupchinsky of the New York-based Ukrainian publishing house Prolog Press. When I mentioned Japan, Kup-

⁵⁶ Memo from Allen to Parta, "TDY in Vienna of August 16-17," 20 August 1984, HIA.

chinsky said he had a contact involved in monitoring Soviet human rights abuses who might be helpful.

With two letters of introduction, I was good to go. The office used a travel agency near the Arc de Triomphe that was headed by Jean-Claude Leroy, the husband of our reports editor, Patricia. Jean-Claude reserved my flights, booked me into the Hotel Okura in downtown Tokyo, and used his contacts at JAL Airlines to get me an upgrade for the long flight to Tokyo. Soviet airspace was closed to Western airline traffic, so we flew over the North Pole and stopped in Anchorage, Alaska for refueling. I didn't sleep much on the plane, I was too excited. It was my first trip to the Far East. We flew over the ice and snow-covered Pole in bright sunshine, and the clear weather continued all the way down to Anchorage. Alaska rising out of the Arctic Sea was a spectacular sight.

My first call in Tokyo was to Kupchinsky's contact, Shin-ichi Masakagi. He told me to meet him as soon as possible on the steps of the Diet, the Japanese Parliament. He sounded breathless. When I got to the Diet, he came running out, grabbed me by the hand, and said he had organized a meeting in support of Academician Andrei Sakharov, who had been in exile in Gorky since 1980. We literally ran to the meeting room. Someone was addressing a group of politicians. As it was all in Japanese, I couldn't follow the argument, but it was clear that everyone was very caught up in the proceedings. A large portrait of Sakharov was displayed up front. As Kupchinsky had told me, Masakagi was an active supporter of human rights in the USSR, and was in frequent telephone contact with human rights advocates there.

Masakagi was in his late thirties or early forties, and short of stature. He had boundless energy and unlimited reserves of rather un-Japanese enthusiasm. He was frequently seen with a phone to each ear, holding two conversations at once. Cell phones were already common in Japan. He spoke Russian, and had spent time in the USSR. As a student, he had led protests at Tokyo University, and still bore physical scars from the police batons. He was now a businessman who made his livelihood from several different companies. One was a yoghurt manufacturing enterprise, and another was a market research company called Mikoh Research.

After the meeting we went to his office, and I explained our project. Shin-ichi was familiar with Western radio stations, and viewed their broadcasts as an essential tool to preserve human rights in the USSR. He was prepared to use Mikoh Research to handle interviewing in Japan. He introduced me to his parents, and his significant other, Miiko Kataoka, a leading Japanese feminist. Feminism was a daring activity in Japan's male-dominated society, but Miiko had written a



Shin-Ichi Masagaki, my main contact in Tokyo, and also my good friend.

well-received book on this near-taboo subject. Shin-ichi's parents invited me to dinner at their home, and later took me to a restaurant for Kobe beef (a great delicacy). In short, I was given a red-carpet welcome. Shin-ichi and I progressed rapidly from business acquaintances to genuine friendship.

The day after the Sakharov meeting, I had lunch with William Hall, Senior Vice-President of Audience Studies International Market Research (ASI). The meeting had been set up through Dentsu, Young & Rubicam Japan. Ed Ney had been as good as his word. Hall was a laid-back Australian in his early forties, who had lived in Japan for a long time, and had a Japanese wife. He immediately agreed to be involved in the interviewing project. That was good news. Despite Masagaki's undoubted enthusiasm, I suspected he had too many other commitments to handle matters on his own. My hope was to arrange for the two organizations to work together, and that was what was eventually decided. ASI Market Research would manage the project, and Masagaki would recruit and oversee a team of interviewers. Mikoh Research would function as a sub-contractor of ASI Market Research.⁵⁷ Masagaki would conduct a pilot study of 20 interviews in late summer and early fall, and we would see where we went from there.⁵⁸

Another potentially useful contact was Prof. Hiroshi Kimura of the Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University. Kimura had close contacts with the Research department of RFE/RL in Munich. He was in Tokyo on business, and we met for a drink. I outlined our project, he expressed interest, and asked to be

⁵⁷ Parta Memo for the Record, "Japan Field Trip, June 24-July 2, 1984," HIA.

⁵⁸ Letter from Hall to Parta, 16 July 1984, HIA.

put on the distribution list for our reports. While unable to do any interviewing himself, he said he would be on the lookout for possible interviewers.

I made a point of contacting NHK, the Japanese national radio station, to explain our work and offer our cooperation.⁵⁹ I was invited to discuss NHK's Russian-language broadcasts with Eiichi Kimura, Director of the Overseas Broadcasting Department, and his deputy, Kenzo Yaguchi, over several cups of green tea. The Russian Service put out a half-hour program twice daily. The signal was weak in European Russia, but stronger in Siberia and the Far East. Caffeine does not agree with me, but I kept drinking. If political questions ever arose concerning our work in Japan, it would be useful to have NHK on board. It would also be good for future interviewers to be aware of their interest in the project. NHK was considering building a relay station in Gabon in the hope of increasing signal strength in the European USSR. Additional Russian programming might follow. Given the traditional Japanese circumspection toward the Soviets, this sounded quite positive. My hosts wanted to receive our reports, and I undertook to share any data on their Russian-language broadcasts that came our way.

Japanese society, from what I saw of it, was homogeneous, conservative, and controlled. I was very impressed by the high standard of living and the ubiquitous presence of high technology. I sensed a kind of composure in the people—even when they were being crammed into subway cars in bustling Tokyo.

It was clear that patience and perseverance would be required to nurture our project, but I was hopeful we would get there in the end.

INVESTIGATING THE SOVIET MINDSET

I had long wanted to find a means of measuring how much support Soviet citizens felt for the Soviet system. Prof. Ellen Mickiewicz had floated the idea during her visit the previous year, and Jon Lodeesen of the Policy Office in Munich thought it was something we should pursue. We had the data to do it. During the 1970s and early 1980s, we had queried respondents on a number of topics that related in one way or another to civil liberties, and I was confident that the reactions gleaned from this would allow us to measure authoritarian and liberal strains of opinion in the Soviet adult urban population.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Letter from Parta to Buckley, 5 July 1984, HIA.

⁶⁰ R. Eugene Parta, "Civil Liberties and the Soviet Citizen: Attitudinal Types and Western Radio Listening," AR 6-84, September 1984, HIA.

We examined the survey data for fourteen civil liberties questions on the basis of cross-tabulation, a correlation matrix, and factor analysis,⁶¹ and selected five questions for further study. They covered freedom of speech, dissent, legality, the right to emigrate, and racial tolerance. The sample included just under 6,000 Soviet citizens.⁶²

Five clear attitudinal types emerged. At one end of the spectrum were the Liberals (13%), who were generally supportive of civil rights and critical of the Soviet government's position. At the other end of the scale were the Hardliners (12%). The other three types represented gradations between these two poles. Moderates (29%) supported civil rights to some extent, but had more reservations than Liberals. Conservatives (28%) expressed some degree of opposition to, or discomfort with, the concept of civil liberties, but were less openly negative than the Hardliners. At the center of the scale, the Indifferent category (19%) grouped respondents who remained non-committal.⁶³

The obvious danger was that the use of concepts that were commonplace in Western society but unfamiliar to Soviet citizens would create an artifact.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, the scale improved our understanding of existing authoritarian and proto-democratic strains in Soviet society. There was a clear correlation with media consumption patterns, notably the use of Western radio.

The most Liberal region in the USSR was the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), followed by the Caucasus (Georgia and Armenia), and the Moscow and Leningrad conurbations.⁶⁵ This was no surprise. The Baltic States were the only part of the USSR to have had independent Western-oriented governments during the inter-war period. They had been grafted on to the USSR by force in 1940, and SAAOR research had consistently shown them to be less conformist than the rest of the USSR. Georgia was one of the last parts of the Tsarist Empire to have been subdued by the Bolsheviks in the 1920s, and had always been known for a relatively independent way of life. Moscow and Leningrad had

61 Parta, "Civil Liberties and the Soviet Citizen." The study contains a series of appendices explaining the methodology used.

62 The total sample from which the data were drawn was 5,782 respondents. Rural respondents were eliminated from the database in order to strengthen the analysis, which focused on the adult urban population. A further 1,286 respondents were eliminated because they contributed insufficient data for analysis. The final database for the study was 3,310 cases.

63 See Chart 5 in Appendix 1.

64 The expression "opinion artifact" as used here implies that the respondent had no previously held opinion on the topic in question, but provided an answer on the spur of the moment.

65 Parta, "Civil Liberties and the Soviet Citizen," 5.

a more sophisticated and educated population, and were the center of most Soviet dissident activity. At the other end of the spectrum, the least Liberal and most Hardline attitudes were evident in the European RSFSR, Siberia, and Central Asia.

The attitudinal spectrum gave us a handle on media consumption patterns among different Soviet social “types.” Liberals listened to foreign radio at the extremely high rate of 79%. Even among Moderates, the rate dropped off steeply to only 40%. Inversely, only 10% of Hardliners listened to foreign radio (usually claiming that they only did so to “know the enemy”). They got most of their information from Soviet television and agitprop meetings. Liberals made up one-third of the audience to foreign radio, even though they represented only 12% of the adult urban population. They were also heavy consumers of newspapers and cited word-of-mouth as a valued source of information. In short, they talked to each other and in all likelihood passed on information gathered from foreign broadcasts.

Differences in the composition of the audience to each foreign station were clearly apparent.⁶⁶ Liberals comprised half the audience to Radio Liberty, but only one-quarter of the audiences to VOA, BBC, and DW, which were all dominated by Moderates. When I presented these findings at a strategy planning conference on audience expansion in Munich, it prompted serious discussion among Radio management. It was clear that if Radio Liberty wanted to expand its audience, it would have to find a way to attract more Moderates without losing the Liberals.

WAR SCARE IN USSR

Tensions between the US and the USSR intensified during the years 1982-1983. The US had begun taking a more forceful stance under Reagan, with the confrontational “Evil Empire” speech, and the unveiling of the “Star Wars” missile defense shield. The Soviet Union responded in kind. Both sides deployed new long-range nuclear missiles. The Soviet SS-20 missiles were rolled out on mobile launching pads which were easy to hide and almost impossible to detect. The US positioned in Europe Pershing II ballistic missiles, which greatly reduced strike time to the USSR. Awareness of the threat of war reached new heights in the West. We decided to find out how Soviet citizens were reacting.

⁶⁶ See Chart 6 in Appendix 1.

In the course of our regular interviewing, we put the following question to 2,983 Soviet travelers between July 1982 and December 1983:

There has been a lot written lately in both East and West on the danger of nuclear war. Do you feel that the danger of nuclear war is greater now than a few years ago? If so, why?

More than half the respondents (56%) believed the danger had increased recently, 22% disagreed, and 23% were unsure. Responses showed an interesting trend over time. In the summer of 1982, 47% of respondents felt the danger had increased. The rate rose to 65% by late 1983. (It should be remembered that at the end of 1983 NATO had held a ten-day exercise named Able Archer, which aimed to test military communications in the event of war. The exercise simulated a Soviet invasion of Western Europe which could not be contained and was therefore countered with a nuclear strike on the USSR. Considerable efforts were made to reassure the Soviets this was only an exercise, but in a period where General Secretary Andropov's health was declining, the Soviet leaders were skeptical and fearful, and all Soviet military forces were put on highest alert. Misunderstandings at a time like this could easily have triggered a real war.)

Asked to cite causes for the rise in tension, 43% of our respondents evoked what they deemed an aggressive Western policy, and 17% blamed it on the uncontrolled arms race between the super-powers. Listening to Western radio did not appear to influence these views: the proportions were roughly the same for both listeners and non-listeners.⁶⁷

After our report on the war scare came out, I received a call from Kevin Klose, the Moscow correspondent of the *Washington Post*, who had seen a copy of our report and was looking for any additional information we might have. I put him in touch with the analyst, Dawn Plumb, and told him he owed me a beer should we ever chance to meet. The debt was paid off ten years later when Kevin joined Radio Liberty as Director and we worked together, first in Munich and then in Prague.

Other studies published in 1984 showed that RL's audience had remained essentially stable since the previous reporting period, with a weekly reach in the range of 11.2-18.7 million listeners. Food availability showed considerable

67 Dawn Plumb, "Has the Nuclear Threat Increased? Some Soviet Citizens' Views," AR 1-84, January 1984, HIA.

improvement between the first half of 1983 and the second half. Sugar, margarine, and even bread were in short supply in the first half of the year,⁶⁸ but, after the summer growing season, fruit, vegetables, and dairy products were more readily available in the second half.⁶⁹

SAAOR COMES OF AGE

When the Bailey-Urban Commission recommended that Audience Research should be hived off to an independent entity, the BIB had asked Jim Critchlow to review the work of both SAAOR and EEAOR. He came to Europe to do this at the beginning of 1984. The part of his trip concerning SAAOR took him to Paris to review the work of our office, to Copenhagen to meet with the OMR research institute, to Munich to gauge the reactions of RL management and programmers to SAAOR's output, and to London to talk to BBC executives about their use of SAAOR research. Although the final written report for the record was not issued until 1986, Critchlow's findings were shared informally with the BIB and RFE/RL management shortly after his trip.

The high point of the report was undoubtedly Critchlow's emphasis on our new-found ability to tap into Soviet public opinion:

For outsiders who study the Soviet Union, the most important development in recent years has been extension of the audience research methodology to gauge Soviet public opinion. SAAOR can now provide advice on what Soviet citizens think about such vital questions as Afghanistan and the nuclear threat.⁷⁰

While acknowledging that SAAOR's primary purpose was to measure listenership to RL, Critchlow made it clear that our activities had come to have a far broader national importance. He noted that the "pioneering work" of SAAOR analysts had succeeded in identifying and quantifying currents of Soviet public opinion on specific issues, and in determining overall patterns of loyalty and disaffection in Soviet society. Our work on public opinion would allow Western researchers to understand an aspect of Soviet policy that had previously eluded them, and this would have significant policy implications. Academic and govern-

68 Dawn Plumb, "Food Supply in the USSR: Shortages Spread to Staples," AR 2-84, February 1984, HIA.

69 Dawn Plumb, "Food Supply in the USSR: Clear Signs of Improvement," AR 7-84, December 1984, HIA.

70 Critchlow, "RFE/RL's Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research," 1986, HIA.

mental analysts were becoming increasingly familiar with SAAOR's findings, and making more and more use of them in their own studies. He emphasized that it was in the public interest to ensure the continuing existence and integrity of SAAOR and its East European counterpart.

Critchlow began his trip in Paris, and went on to Copenhagen in the company of Charlie Allen. He visited the places where the interviews were conducted (usually shops stocking the kind of low-cost Western merchandise that appealed to Soviet travelers), and attended a two-hour staff meeting with Steen Sauerberg, the institute director, and some of the interviewers, which he found informal but business-like:

The Director led off with a critique of individual interviewers' reports... The main topic was recent changes in the questionnaire which some of the interviewers insisted were causing them difficulties... Mr. Allen and the supervisor listened sympathetically to the objections, explained the rationale for the changes, and were firm about the need to hold to them. Mr. Allen also advised the interviewers of an increased priority being given to interviews with non-Russians among the Soviet visitors and to choose the latter when given a choice.

Intrigued by the interviewers' shop talk, Critchlow remarked that the search for respondents often contained an element of the thrill of the chase. The interviewers' professionalism and enthusiasm impressed him—and the sentiment was reciprocated. According to Charlie Allen, he cut a memorable figure as someone who had been involved in audience research for many years, who knew how to listen, and who could bring a historical perspective to bear on their work.

Critchlow's next stop was Munich, where RFE/RL executives expressed strong support for our work, and then he went on to London to confer with the BBC. The Head of the Eastern European Service, the Head of the Russian Service, and the Deputy Head of External Research were all enthusiastic about the services provided by SAAOR. Programmers were showing greater interest in the data, researchers planned to make more use of our database in future, and the BBC was willing to pay more for additional services.

Critchlow's report concluded:

This writer joins in the consensus of informed observers that RFE/RL's Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research activity has maintained a consistently high level of professional competence and responsibility, while

growing to meet new challenges and opportunities. SAAOR continues to play its key role as the only entity equipped to provide the international broadcasting community with reliable data on the media habits of Soviet communications audiences. SAAOR's imaginative accomplishments in testing Soviet public opinion now provide the Western world with an opportunity for enhanced understanding of that long-neglected but nonetheless important fact of Soviet society; this has major policy implications that go beyond the immediate concerns of RFE/RL.⁷¹

Critchlow's experiences made it clear that SAAOR had come of age, and his report did a lot to raise our profile both in Europe and the US.

SAAOR CHARGED WITH CONTRAVENING PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH CODE

But trouble was coming our way from a different direction.

September 14 was Mark Rhodes' birthday and SAAOR was celebrating in the time-honored way with a bottle of champagne and the map of the USSR when the telephone rang. Birthday parties and TGIF were held in Max's old office, the largest room in the apartment, which now housed Nicole, Kathy, and Susan. The map had stayed put, and the office had been re-christened Toad Hall. The area was a hive of processing, coding, analysis, and above all translating. TOAD stood for Translator on Active Duty.

The phone call was from Norman Webb, the Chairman of the Ethics Committee of ESOMAR, the European Society of Market and Opinion Researchers.⁷² ESOMAR set standards for the profession, and most large market and survey research organizations were members. Webb worked for Gallup UK. He announced that concern had arisen over our practice of conducting interviews with Soviet travelers without explicitly informing them that they were being interviewed or observing their right to refuse to participate. So much for a festive evening!

Even though none of the institutes we worked with were members of ESOMAR, we could not afford to ignore its misgivings. I responded that the interview context was conditioned by the Soviet Union's refusal to allow us to engage a survey institute on its soil, and its paranoid attitude to dealings with foreigners.

⁷¹ Critchlow, "RFE/RL's Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research," 24.

⁷² Letter from Parta to Buckley, 18 September 1984, HIA.

Webb sounded embarrassed and awkward. He expressed sympathy for our problems and respect for our work, but said that the ESOMAR code was categorical on this point. The call ended there. I doubted we would hear any more about it.

I was wrong. Two weeks later, I got a letter from a Mr. John Downham of Unilever, who introduced himself as chairman of the “relevant ESOMAR committee.” He informed me that the “issue” had been discussed at a recent meeting of the ESOMAR Committee, after being raised by the “equivalent Committee” of the UK Market Research Society, and he expressed the hope that it would be possible to reach “an agreed and mutually acceptable solution which meets the requirements of our code.”⁷³

I spoke to Downham by phone, and then sent him a four-page response laying out the rationale for our interview methods.⁷⁴ He claimed that an open interview system had been used for similar projects, but it seemed likely that he was referring to RFE’s interviews with citizens of Eastern Europe. I explained that we had conducted several hundred trial interviews with an open questionnaire in 1977–1978, but had had to abandon the attempt when it became apparent that the refusal rate skyrocketed as soon as informants saw that their responses were being recorded. In the informal conversational setting we customarily used, most respondents would freely discuss Western radio listening, which was now a commonplace activity in the USSR, but they were not accustomed to having their responses directly recorded. Even in the USSR, most surveys were carried out either by phone or mail. I added that, to the best of our knowledge, an open approach had never been used successfully on Soviet citizens by any Western research organization.

I made it clear that names were never recorded, that interviewees were free to break off the discussion at any point, and that the protection of the respondent’s identity was our paramount concern. I tried to clarify the difference between interviewing citizens of the USSR who came from a closed society, and interviewing Western Europeans who came from open societies. Finally, I emphasized the importance of our work to all Western broadcasters to the USSR.

Talking to Downham, I sensed that, like Webb, he was sympathetic to our problem. Unfortunately the ESOMAR code, designed for an entirely different situation, was very strict. We agreed to meet in London, but first an air traffic controllers’ strike got in the way, and then I had to leave for the US. Charlie Allen went to London in my place in November.

73 Letter to Parta from Downham, 26 September 1984, HIA.

74 Letter to Downham from Parta, 26 October 1984, HIA.

Downham was polite but purposeful. He began the meeting by stating that he was obliged to investigate since a total of three complaints had been filed by ESOMAR members about SAAOR. This was odd. We had in fact approached one UK firm that belonged to ESOMAR, but only one. Why then were there three complaints? Downham admitted that he too thought it was strange, since the name of SAAOR had never come up before.

Downham's questions to Charlie focused primarily on the way the interview was conducted, and on field verification. He seemed particularly concerned about possible reprisals against respondents, asking about how the groups were watched, and what kind of personal data was entered in the computer. The security of our data storage was discussed. Charlie did not find Downham hostile, and detected a strong degree of curiosity and even admiration for our work. He asked whether interviewers were forbidden to mention that a survey research project was under way, and Charlie reassured him that this was not the case. He was interested in our relations with other stations, specifically the BBC. Charlie left the meeting with the impression that Downham appreciated the sensitive nature of the project and would try to find a solution.⁷⁵

1985

USSR events

Gorbachev takes power and initiates reform.

- March: Chernenko dies; Gorbachev becomes General Secretary of CPSU (aged 54).
- March: Soviet press calls for glasnost in reporting on Soviet affairs.
- May: Anti-alcohol campaign begins.
- July: Shevardnadze enters Politburo, replaces Gromyko as Foreign Minister.
- July: Yakovlev to head Central Committee Propaganda Department.
- November: Pravda criticizes Brezhnev leadership.
- November: Reagan and Gorbachev discuss Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) at Geneva summit.

With the arrival of a new, much younger General Secretary, who lost no time in shaking up the system and placing in positions of power the associates with whom he had already discussed possible avenues of reform (Aleksandr Yakovlev

⁷⁵ Memo from Allen to Parta, "London TDY of 2 November 1984," HIA.

and Eduard Shevardnadze), the Soviet Union made a sharp break with the comatose one-year tenure of Chernenko.

SAAOR continued to expand its activities with the addition of a new field assistant, innovations in the European interviewing field, and attempts to extend the scope of our interviewing to Asia. During this period, new forms of reporting were initiated, closer links were forged with other Western broadcasters, and attempts to cast doubt on the credibility of our data were successfully defused.

STAFFING AND TRAINING

Jaroslav Martyniuk joined SAAOR as a field assistant in November 1985. His family was Ukrainian. They had left Ukraine at the end of the war, and managed to reach Bavaria in the American Zone of Occupied Germany after a nerve-racking journey through Slovakia, Hungary, and Austria. After two years in a DP (displaced person) camp in Regensburg, they had immigrated to Chicago in 1949. Slavko held a degree in accountancy and finance from the University of Illinois. After graduating, he had attended the US Army Intelligence School and worked as an imagery interpreter, analyzing intelligence gathered by U-2 spy planes. He worked for Amoco Oil for 12 years, before joining the Office of European Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris as an analyst on energy questions.

Slavko met Charlie Allen at a wine-tasting seminar just as his term at the OECD was coming to an end. Charlie needed an assistant to help with field work, and thought Slavko's knowledge of Ukrainian would be useful. Slavko's boss at the OECD, Wally Hopkins, was an acquaintance of mine, so I asked him for a reference. Hopkins said that the man he knew as "Jerry Martin" (his Ukrainian name was apparently too much of a mouthful at the OECD) was a competent analyst who had a "dogged" approach to researching a problem. Slavko was anxious to stay on in Paris, and accepted an initial offer of a one-year contract. He later became part of our permanent staff.

A new staff training program had been set up in Munich, and several members of our staff took advantage of it. Roselyn Romberg went to the headquarters of the Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) in Massachusetts to receive additional training on VMS software for our mini-VAX computer. Kathy Mihalisko was approved for a course in the Turkish language. Charlie Allen attended a two-week survey research course in London under the auspices of the British Institute of Management. The course dealt with statistical methods, sampling design,

questionnaire design, and interviewing. It was conducted by William Belson, a highly respected figure in the survey research field.⁷⁶ Patricia Leroy had attended a course on report writing at the same institute a few years earlier. Charlie came back with advice on how to conduct pilot studies of public opinion questions using different versions of the same question.

In October, we took on our first full-time intern. The volume of interviews was constantly increasing, and our staff was unable to cope with the burden of coding and excerpting the questionnaires and entering them in the database. We needed someone to handle data entry. I had received a letter from Steedman Hinckley, Jr, who was interning at EEAOR in Munich.⁷⁷ Steedman had heard a talk by Kathy Mihalisko, which he said made SAAOR “sound so intriguing I would like to contribute my efforts there.” He described his experiences to date: BA in Russian from Wesleyan University, travel in his Volkswagen camper throughout the USSR, work on a kolkhoz in the Crimea, personal research on Western broadcasting while in the USSR—all most resourceful and highly relevant—but what really caught my eye was his spell as a guide and bear manager in the Aleutian bush of Alaska!

Steedman stayed with us from October 1985 to August 1986. Despite the humdrum nature of his work, he looks back on it as a period of great personal and professional enrichment:

It was clear to me that the work was unlike anything else being done anywhere... It was equally clear to me that the work had relevance which transcended RFE/RL's specific purposes. It produced unique insights into all kinds of Soviet reality, the 'specialness' of which became even clearer when I began working for the US government in 1987 and was in a position to compare the quality of the information produced by SAAOR with that of other US agencies... I've been fortunate enough to work alongside some of the best Soviet/Russia hands in the business, in a variety of settings, from Embassy Moscow to the White House and, ounce for ounce, SAAOR staff possessed, hands down, the richest country expertise. I learned so much in the short time I was there.⁷⁸

Steedman went on to a highly successful career in the U.S. Government.

⁷⁶ Memo from Allen to Parta, “Survey Research Course of November 3–15,” 20 November 1985, HIA.

⁷⁷ Letter from Hinckley to Parta, 2 October 1985, HIA.

⁷⁸ E-mail from Steedman Hinckley to Patricia Leroy, 16 July 2020.

NEW INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE INAUGURATED IN VIENNA

In January 1985, Helmut Aigner of INTORA sent us a proposal for conducting interviews that he felt would meet ESOMAR's requirements regarding an open questionnaire.⁷⁹ He proposed doing a pilot study with 25 Bulgarians, before moving on to travelers from the USSR. The EEAOR office in Munich did not oppose the plan.

The pilot project would experiment with four different interview techniques: 1. Openly filling out our standard questionnaire; 2. Openly filling out a questionnaire that Aigner had developed himself; 3. Showing Aigner's questionnaire but not filling it out; 4. Using our standard questionnaire without showing it to the respondent (our current method). Aigner had not yet shown us his questionnaire. He was keeping his concept close to his chest, and we had to agree that it was to remain INTORA property, and we would not turn it over to any other institute. If the pilot proved successful, INTORA would continue with Soviet travelers.

We waited impatiently for the results of the study. What was the secret of Aigner's questionnaire? Why did he expect it to work when our previous attempts to use an open questionnaire had failed? In early April, Aigner announced that the test had been expanded, and that the results were so impressive that a test with Soviet tourists was justified.⁸⁰ He now unveiled his method. It was ingenious yet simple. The questionnaire had been printed up on large cards with tourist scenes of Vienna on the side facing the respondent, and the questions on the side facing the interviewer. Aigner's logic was that respondents were less fearful of responding to a questionnaire than having onlookers *see* them responding to a questionnaire. His experiment with Bulgarian respondents bore this out. But how would Soviet respondents react?

In August, Aigner wrote:

We already have 20 completed interviews. While it is certainly too early to attempt a resumé, I can say that the method is feasible for use. As I have seen by looking through the first 20 interviews, it must be taken into consideration that the interviewers are still very nervous and excitable about the method. This is not so obvious in the degree of completeness of questioning

79 Letter from Aigner to Parta, 24 January 1985, HIA.

80 Letter from Aigner to Parta, 4 April 1985, HIA.

as in the amount of commentary recorded. Virtually all the questions have been posed, but very little commentary noted. I can assure you that after an interviewer has completed his first several interviews, his nervousness will have diminished; then, recorded commentary will be forthcoming in addition to the thorough questioning.⁸¹

The four principal interviewers were Eastern Europeans who spoke Russian. Aigner believed that they were less likely than Soviet emigré interviewers to make respondents uneasy. As he had thought, more extensive comments were forthcoming as the interviewers gained in experience. There was no shortage of Soviet visitors to Vienna—in July Aigner noted that Soviet river cruise ships with an average of 138 passengers were arriving every day on the Danube. In time it became one of our most successful interviewing sites.

THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

We had begun asking Soviet travelers what they thought of the war in Afghanistan in the early 1980s, but the responses were inconclusive. Many respondents showed little interest in the conflict—some seemed barely even aware of it—while others chose not to discuss it. For a while the question was dropped, but as the war dragged on and casualties mounted, the Soviet press began to write more openly about the war, and the issue started to filter into the public consciousness. SAAOR reintroduced a short battery of questions at the beginning of 1984. The question ran:

I have a very confused understanding of what is happening in Afghanistan. The few reports we in the West have received are not very informative and sometimes even contradictory. What is happening there? How do you think the situation will develop in the future? Is Afghanistan important or not? Where do you get this information?

It was hoped that this neutral, non-judgmental approach would make it easier for respondents to engage in a discussion.

In 1985, we issued our first report on Soviet citizens' reactions to the war, based on 2,960 interviews conducted the previous year. The analyst was Sallie

81 Letter from Aigner to Parta, 12 August 1985, HIA.

Wise. The MIT computer simulation was used to project this data on to the Soviet adult urban population. Respondents were more willing to discuss the question than a few years earlier, and the refusal rate was only about 10%. The data showed growing discontent with the Afghan war, which was now about five years old. Only about one-quarter of the Soviet urban population expressed approval of Soviet policy in Afghanistan, while another quarter disapproved. About half were ambivalent or held no opinion. Predictions concerning the eventual success of Soviet policy in Afghanistan were at similar levels. It was clear that lack of popular support for the war was likely to pose a problem for the Kremlin down the road.⁸²

IN THE LINE OF FIRE

As SAAOR became more and more successful in obtaining information on theoretically unapproachable topics from a theoretically inaccessible population, we were regularly obliged to defend the validity of our methods and the credibility of our data. Challenges came from different quarters and for different reasons.

One line of criticism came from Soviet emigrés who doubted that respondents in the country they had known could hold attitudes that differed so significantly from the Party line. In January 1982, Kirill Khenkin, a Russian service editor, had published an article called “Notes on Radio Liberty” in *Kontinent*, the Russian nationalist journal edited by Vladimir Maximov.⁸³ The article asserted that an Aeroflot air hostess interviewed at London airport had said that she didn’t listen to RL broadcasts and did not intend to because they were anti-Soviet and unobjective. Khenkin claimed that she was paid for the interview, and asked to sign a receipt “for information given.” The article went on: “She sees this as a provocation and so that she won’t be removed from the international flights, she answers as she was taught to.”

The incident had been taken from a SAAOR internal memorandum dated June 14, 1979, but Khenkin had twisted the facts. The air hostess had indeed been interviewed, but not at London airport. The conversation had taken place in a private setting in another Western country with no third parties present. Con-

82 Sallie Wise, “The Soviet Public and the War in Afghanistan: Perceptions, Prognoses, Information Sources,” AR 4-85, June 1985, HIA. See also Chart 7 in Appendix 1: Attitudes Toward Soviet Policy in Afghanistan: 1984–1987.

83 Memo from Parta to Walter, 21 January 1982, “Article by Kiril Khenkin, ‘Notes on Radio Liberty,’ *Kontinent* No. 30,” HIA.

trary to Khenkin's assertions, the air hostess did listen to Radio Liberty, and enjoyed its cultural and literary broadcasts, although she had indeed said that its political tendency was usually anti-Soviet. The rest was pure fabrication. The respondent worked on Soviet domestic flights only, and was not in the West in a professional capacity. She was not asked to sign a receipt, and she was not paid. It had never been our practice to make remuneration to Soviet citizens in the West.

Although most of RL's broadcasters were happy to receive audience feedback, a few members of the Russian Service who had grown up in the USSR and suffered under the system were skeptical about our research. Khenkin was one of them. They were unable to believe that Soviet citizens traveling abroad would freely admit to a Westerner that they listened to Western radio stations—let alone to the demonized Radio Liberty—and this made them reluctant to accept data which they found unpalatable. Khenkin seems to have fabricated the report in an attempt to discredit SAAOR's interview methods, and hence cast doubt on the validity of our findings.

A similar position was taken by a Soviet emigré scholar whom I met at a panel on Afghanistan held at the Harvard Faculty Club in April 1985. The panel was hosted by the Russian Research Center and attended by a small but select group that included academics and government officials. I presented some of SAAOR's findings on Afghanistan as reported by Sallie Wise, emphasizing that attitudes toward the war were evolving in a negative direction, and wound up by saying that Afghanistan was not yet the Soviet equivalent of Vietnam but that, if the military stalemate continued, and if public attitudes to the war became more negative, it could well become their Vietnam in the future.

Although most of those present expressed considerable interest in SAAOR findings (and quite a few of them asked to be added to our distribution list), one of the other panel members, Dr. Liah Greenfeld, who was on the social sciences faculty at Harvard, objected to my referring to "public opinion" in the USSR. Greenfeld was born in the USSR, though she had left in 1972, and she rejected the idea that such a thing as public opinion could exist in the Soviet Union, given that citizens had no access to information other than that dispensed by official government media. In the absence of free media, she argued, people had no way to form opinions that differed from the Party line.

I agreed with Dr. Greenfeld that it was still premature to talk about "public opinion," as understood in the West, in the USSR. I had been careful not to do so, referring instead to the "attitudes" held by the population. But this critique called for a response. I pointed out that Western radio already played an impor-

tant role in the Soviet media landscape, that the alternative information it provided was responsible for helping to create attitudes that differed from official positions on the events of the day, and that we had published numerous studies that bore this out. I added that her argument ignored word-of-mouth communication, which SAAOR research had shown to be an important factor in the Soviet informational scene.

I don't think I convinced Liah Greenfeld, but her position mirrored views held by some Soviet emigrants who had moved in opposition or dissident circles in the USSR (including Kirill Khenkin and a few other RL Russian Service contributors). These people had often had little contact with more conventional Soviet citizens, and as a result they had trouble believing that anyone outside their own circles could hold critical views of Soviet reality. Dr. Greenfeld is now a distinguished Professor at Boston University.

THE CONVERSION OF VLADIMIR SHLAPENTOKH

Some of our critics were more open to persuasion. Dr. Vladimir Shlapentokh had been a leading sociologist at the USSR Academy of Sciences before emigrating to the United States in 1979. He had been sponsored by Ellen Mickiewicz, and became a professor of sociology at Michigan State University. I had met him in 1983 when we were on a panel together at the AAASS conference in Kansas City, but his focus there was the Soviet Interview Project (SIP). He was skeptical of SIP's ability to learn anything about the USSR by interviewing emigrants, and he had nothing to say about SAAOR at that time.

Several years later, Shlapentokh visited the head of International Broadcasting and Audience Research at the BBC, Graham Mytton, and discovered that BBC's Russian service relied heavily on SAAOR's audience research data. His curiosity was aroused. Mytton called me from London to say that Shlapentokh was in his office, that he was interested in our work but had a number of questions about it, and that he would like to pay us a visit.

Shlapentokh arrived at our office early next morning. He was largely bald, and scrutinized the world through heavy plastic-rimmed glasses. He spent an entire day in the office. He read our reports, looked at questionnaires filled out by interviewers in the field, and asked questions about everything. Charlie, Mark, and I took him to lunch at the Allard restaurant in the Latin Quarter, where he went on quizzing us over *canard aux olives*. After lunch we went back to the office, and he spent the afternoon picking through everything with his fine-tooth comb.

At the end of the day, sitting on the couch in my office, he said, "This has been a most interesting day for me!"

"Because there's a large audience for Western broadcasts in the USSR?"

"No, we've known that for a long time.⁸⁴ What strikes me is that these travelers are willing to talk to you about it. That means they're no longer afraid. And that will be very important for future developments in the Soviet Union."

A prescient comment. Shlapentokh had come to our office as a potential critic, and left it as a supporter. He still had doubts about the Soviet Interview Project headed by James Millar, but SAAOR had won him over. It was a great boost to office morale to have gained the approval of such an eminent scholar. We ended the day with a beer at a Latin Quarter bistro where Shlapentokh had arranged to meet the emigré economist Igor Birman.

BRIE AU POIVRE

Shlapentokh was by no means the only visitor we received. Our guests included members of both academia and the international broadcasting community. Academic visitors included Alexandre Bennigsen, a professor at the Sorbonne and the University of Chicago, who specialized in Soviet Central Asia; Maurice Friedberg of the University of Illinois, an expert on Russian literature and the Soviet dissident movement; and John Garrard of the University of Arizona, who discussed his book on the Soviet Writers' Union. Among the BIB board members who dropped in were the writer Ben Wattenberg, the theologian Michael Novak, and the author James Michener. We told them about our operation, they brought us up to date on events at the BIB, and Michener explained how he set about writing his books.

Often the visitors would give a short talk, and then we would provide them with lunch, courtesy of the *charcuterie* on Rue du Bac, and the *fromagerie* on Rue de Grenelle. We used to set up a buffet with salads, cold cuts, baguettes and *brie au poivre* in the largest office, aka Toad Hall. A buffet lunch, a glass of wine, and an

84 Soviet sociologists seem to have had access to SAAOR reports from the 1980s, if not before. A USIA officer visiting Moscow in the 1980s observed a copy of a SAAOR report on Afghanistan on a researcher's desk at the Institute of Sociology at the USSR Academy of Sciences, and I myself received confirmation during a trip in 1991 that staff at the Institute of Sociology were aware of reports on Western radio listening and Afghanistan. It should be borne in mind that Soviet officials and Soviet researchers had little access, if any, to this kind of information aside from what SAAOR reported. We might have been attacked in Soviet media as an intelligence operation, but we were never criticized for inaccurate reporting.

informal chat did wonders to reassure the Board that our staff was real and our operation was concrete, and that it was safe to cite our research in the public sphere.

REVIEWS OF RL PROGRAMMING

Listener Panel Reviews, which had been abandoned at the end of the 1970s, were revived in 1982, and Susan Roehm took over coordination of the project in 1985. Six panelists were chosen each month from a list of recent emigrants in Rome. We tried to vary the demographic composition of the panel as much as possible to make it more representative of the Soviet listening audience.

Unlike listener panel reviews in the 1970s, which had selected random items from a typical day's Russian-service output, the revamped report series focused on specific programs. In 1985, our reviews included the news program *USA Today*, the literary program *From the Other Shore*, and the religious broadcast *Not by Bread Alone*. Each of the panelists was given program tapes, a cassette recorder, and a set of questionnaires to fill out. They were asked to provide a written evaluation of each program, and to fill out rating sheets covering content and speakers. The first asked them to indicate how interesting they found the program, what new information they had gleaned from it, how effective it would be for the Soviet listener, the suitability of the format, the quality of the language, and whether they would have made the effort of listening through jamming. The second concerned the speakers' pronunciation, speed of delivery, and, perhaps most important of all, their tone.

After turning in the completed questionnaires, all the panelists were brought together for a group discussion conducted by a SAAOR staff member. This enabled the staffer to meet the reviewers, solicit their overall impressions and suggestions, and ascertain what struck them most and what they disliked. As for the panelists, it gave them the chance to expand on their written evaluations. The written comments were translated into English and issued in the form of a report which included a synopsis of the findings, the salient points to emerge from the group discussion, and the rating sheets.

THE DANGERS OF SCHADENFREUDE

One of the reasons our research sometimes aroused resistance in RL's Russian Service was the question of tone. What tone should you adopt when talking to the Soviet listener? Our findings indicated that a harsh anti-Soviet tone was

counter-productive, and harmed the station's credibility. Some of the emigré broadcasters took exception to this, feeling that their personal experience in the USSR gave them the edge over Western research in making decisions. Still resentful over their treatment by the Soviet regime, they sometimes failed to see that the Soviet people and their government were not the same thing.

The argument came to a head over RL's coverage of the Afghan war. In the early years of the conflict, RL's reporting was criticized by many listeners (including those opposed to the Soviet invasion) because they saw its tone as bordering on Schadenfreude, and because it failed to convey empathy for the loss of young Soviet soldiers.

When I mentioned this to Jim Buckley, he suggested that I travel to Munich to discuss it with the Russian service. He held a meeting in his office which was attended by a dozen Russian-service programmers who worked on Afghanistan. I explained that, while many RL listeners agreed with the general critique of the war, our data showed that they were put off by a broadcast tone that failed to take listener psychology into account. Whatever listeners might think about the war in general, the loss of young Russian lives was a tragedy. Listeners sometimes sensed an undercurrent of satisfaction when RL talked about the number of Russian soldiers killed. They felt that Radio Liberty should maintain its critical stance on the war, while at the same time showing sympathy for the loss of life.⁸⁵

The Russian service programmers listened attentively to what I had to say, and I was surprised that there was no real pushback. Of course, the fact that we were holding the meeting in the President's office signaled that management was on my side. Still, I sensed that the broadcasters, who were usually a contentious lot, were taking the message on board. Some of them might already have been aware that there was a problem. From then on, the service abandoned what could be interpreted as a rather smug approach to Russia's problems, and adopted a tone that showed more empathy for their plight. Subsequent research showed that as a result the broadcasts became considerably more effective, and listeners' complaints virtually disappeared.

85 See also Memo from Mihalisko to Parta, "A Listener's Comments on RL's Programming on Afghanistan," 16 December 1983, HIA. A science teacher in her 40s from Tula, who listened frequently to RL and other Western stations, made the following comment: "Of course, one can find a few hundred people that think like RL, but what about the rest? Parents always defend their children: the mother of a murderer will always pity her son in the courtroom and think of him as the victim, requiring help. Russians are especially like this. So RL is ruining its own game." Mihalisko noted that these remarks echoed those made by Rome panelists reviewing programming on Afghanistan.

TAKING THE PULSE OF THE NATIONAL MINORITIES

Thanks to the special skills of Kathy Mihalisko, SAAOR pioneered a report series dedicated to radio listening among non-Russians in the USSR. Kathy had specialized in the study of Soviet national minorities at Harvard. She spoke Russian and Ukrainian, and in 1985 she began to study Turkish as an entry language to the Turkic languages spoken in Azerbaijan and most of Central Asia, and attended a conference at the Central Asia Research Centre in Oxford, UK.

At a time when Western scholars attached relatively little importance to the fate and activities of Soviet national minorities, Kathy's expertise allowed us to increase reporting in a critical area. For years we had either studied listening to RL overall, or else focused primarily on the Russian service. Interviewers in the field had for some time been instructed to target non-Russian respondents wherever possible, and as a result our non-Russian database was now stronger. This enabled us to analyze listening in the minority languages of the Soviet Union. As had been the case with the data on food, the information in these reports was not available from any other source.⁸⁶

It turned out that the majority of listeners to the non-Russian language services were actually dual-language listeners. Since Russian was on the air 24 hours a day and the nationality services had limited air time, listeners tended to tune in both languages. Members of most national groups praised RL's "nationality appeal," (by which they meant reporting on local events and programs on history and culture) as well as its coverage of the Soviet Union.⁸⁷ Due to the frequency of dual-language listening and the appeal of targeted programming, weekly listening rates in most of the non-Russian republics were higher than in the RSFSR.

A STAB IN THE BACK

Our problems with ESOMAR were never really resolved, but they faded away. In March, John Downham, the Chairman of the ESOMAR Ethics Committee, informed us that, although the committee appreciated our unusual interviewing conditions, their hands were tied by the terms of the ESOMAR code, which stip-

86 In 1985, SAAOR issued four Nationality Listener Reports (NLRs) covering the Ukrainian and Belorussian services (NLR 1-85), the Tatar-Bashkir and Central Asian services (NLR 2-85), the Baltic services, regrouping Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian (NLR 3-85), and the Caucasian services, regrouping Armenian, Azeri, and Georgian (NLR 4-85).

87 Sallie Wise, SAAOR Executive Summary for 1985, HIA.

ulated that respondents must be notified that an interview was being conducted to allow them to exercise their option to withdraw.⁸⁸ ESOMAR subsequently issued a formal statement to that effect, without mentioning SAAOR.

Since none of the institutes we worked with were members of ESOMAR this had no impact on our work, and ESOMAR took no further action. By issuing a statement, they apparently felt they had done what was expected of them. They had no wish to harm us. What was troubling was that apparently someone did. ESOMAR had received three simultaneous complaints from institutes in Germany, France, and England with whom we had never worked. What we later learned, to our surprise and regret, was that the complaints had been instigated by Henry Hart, the director of EEAOR.

Henry Hart, born Heinrich Herz in Czechoslovakia, had joined RFE in 1957, and became head of the audience research department in 1959. His background was somewhat similar to that of Max Ralis, who had joined the Radios in 1956. Both had been born to Jewish families who left their country of origin in the wake of political upheaval. Max's family had left Russia after the Revolution, and Hart had emigrated from Czechoslovakia to the US after Hitler occupied the Sudetenland. A story he liked to tell is that when he arrived in New York, he looked up and the first thing he saw was a huge billboard which said "Welcome, Budweiser!" Obviously this referred to the beer, but since young Heinrich actually came from Budweis (now Ceske Budejovice), he decided to take the greeting personally... Hart had fought with the US Army in World War II and stayed on in Europe as Chief Officer for Public Opinion Surveys for the Army in Berlin, Bremen, and Northern Bavaria. He held PhD degrees in social psychology and mass communications, and had taught at Indiana University before joining the Radios.

Henry and Max had always disliked each other. The aversion was stronger on Henry's part, due perhaps to the fact that Max's daughter Tammy had interned with him, and probably knew where some of the bodies were buried. Henry had been jealous of Max, and my own relations with him at this point were not particularly good. I had tried to support him when issues that concerned us both came up, and I had done my best to avoid treading on his toes when we expanded our work in Denmark and Austria, but apparently I had not succeeded. We finally learned the truth through Helmut Aigner, who confirmed that Hart had stirred up the whole ESOMAR affair, apparently out of sheer resentment.

88 Letter from Downham to Allen, 13 March 1985, HIA.

Hart submitted the ESOMAR statement to RFE/RL management. Buckley and Gildner rejected it out of hand. I never tackled Hart on his underhanded tactics. Research credibility is difficult to build up but easy to lose, and the last thing RFE/RL needed was open conflict between its two audience research units.

INTERVIEWING IN ASIA

As in previous years, we did our best to expand into interviewing sites outside Western Europe, but although we succeeded in laying the groundwork, it was a long and arduous process and the immediate results were disappointing.

Turkey. Turkey had been on our radar for some time. Istanbul seemed like a good place to tap into respondents from Turkic-speaking areas of the USSR such as Central Asia and Azerbaijan. We took our first steps with the help of Enders Wimbush, an American academic based in Oxford, who ran a journal called *Central Asian Survey*. (Our former analyst Dawn Plumb, who had moved to England for personal reasons, was an assistant editor there.) He also had a research organization in the US. Wimbush and a colleague made exploratory trips to Turkey, lining up people who they thought could be helpful, and he put together a proposal for a SAAOR research operation in Turkey.⁸⁹

I traveled to Istanbul in June 1985. Lynne and I had once spent a vacation there with Turkish friends who had been our neighbors in Munich in the 1960s. My first meetings were with two scholars who had a broad range of contacts in the ex-Soviet Muslim community, Nadir Devlet and Mehmet Saray. Both said that the project was feasible, but that it would take time to put together, and would have to be done carefully. Relations between Turkey and the USSR were fraught, and I would need to tread lightly to avoid attracting the attention of the security agencies. Wimbush had warned me about this before I left.

Dr. Devlet drove me up the Bosphorus to an outdoor seafood restaurant in a spectacular setting. He was a professor of history at Marmara University who had formerly worked for the RL Tatar-Bashkir service in Munich. He had been born in China, and arrived in Turkey aged five at the end of the war. He had been separated from his parents, who had been taken back to the USSR. He spoke excellent English, and was very positive about the project. He had the potential to become a major asset, but he seemed to be over-committed, and it wasn't clear

89 Enders Wimbush, Foreign Area Research, Inc., "Radio Liberty Audience Research Start-up Package for Turkey," 1985, HIA.

how much time he could devote to the project. I suspected he wouldn't be able to do interviewing himself, but hoped he would manage to identify and train interviewers.

Dr. Saray of the University of Istanbul had spent a couple of weeks in Eastern Turkey with so-called "Afghan refugees," most of whom were actually Uzbeks. We dined outdoors at a fish restaurant in the shadow of the mammoth bridge that links Europe to Asia. Saray was interested in our work on Soviet attitudes to the Afghan war, and I promised to send him a copy of our study. But again it seemed that he was committed to too many different projects to spend much time on ours. I left him with some questionnaires to give him an idea what we were looking for.

Most of Wimbush' other contacts were also academics. Meeting with them gave me a deeper knowledge of Istanbul, but I made no concrete progress on our project. We needed to find a professional survey research institute to handle the interviewing. None of my contacts could do anything on their own.

I was staying at the Hilton Hotel. Walking through the lobby one morning, I heard someone call, "Hey, Gene!" Turning around, I spotted an old friend from Munich, David Staats, who was having his shoes shined. David had spent a couple of years at RFE/RL working on Central Asian issues, and was now the head of the Military Aid Mission at the U.S. Consulate. We arranged to meet for a beer at the fabled Pera Palace Hotel, once favored by travelers on the equally fabled Orient Express, and spent a pleasant late afternoon swapping stories about Munich. Staats was curious to know what we were doing in Istanbul, and I saw no reason not to tell him. Later, I found out that Wimbush's partner had also chanced to run into Staats in the Hilton lobby, and had also had a drink with him at the Pera Palace. Small world?

Singapore. In March, Michèle Leroy of Field Service called me to say that Irwin Hankins was in town. Would I be interested in meeting him to talk about research in Southeast Asia? Indeed I would. Hankins worked for a firm called Survey Research Group Ltd. (SRG), which was located in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, and was part of the British-owned AGB group of market research institutes.⁹⁰ Hankins was the Director of SRG in Kuala Lumpur, and Michèle had mentioned our project to him on a recent visit to Singapore.

⁹⁰ Gene Parta, Memo for the Record, "Meeting with Mr. Irwin Hankins, Director of the Survey Research Group, Ltd. in Kuala Lumpur," 12 March 1985, HIA.

Hankins was a Canadian citizen who had been transferred to Southeast Asia from Montreal about eight months previously. He said he had heard about SAAOR from Ukrainian friends in Montreal, and added that he had checked us out with Radio Canada International, and with “friends in Washington.” He struck me as intelligent, businesslike, and professional. He was Jewish, spoke English with the trace of a French-Canadian accent, and said he had close ties to Israel and was “not pro-Soviet.”

Our project intrigued him, and he believed that an operation in Southeast Asia was entirely feasible. He advised setting up a pilot project in Singapore rather than Malaysia, which had tighter surveillance and less Soviet traffic. For security reasons, he proposed running the pilot through a sub-contractor rather than through SRG directly. The pilot he suggested would unroll in four stages: 1) Survey of Soviet traffic and tourism patterns; 2) Identification and recruitment of interviewers; 3) Training of interviewers in both general survey techniques, and the special interview techniques required for Soviet travelers (this last with assistance from SAAOR); 4) Twenty test interviews. He agreed to submit a formal written proposal and I gave him a verbal OK to proceed with the first steps of the pilot.

I traveled to Singapore later in the year to follow up. My first appointment was with Ed Coyningham of USIS,⁹¹ who had served in India with Jay Gildner. USIS had done a number of surveys in Singapore, and Gildner thought Coyningham’s expertise might come in useful. It turned out that Coyningham had spent a year at Johns Hopkins SAIS, my alma mater. He took me to lunch at a German restaurant. My first meal in Singapore was bratwurst and beer. I might as well have been back in Munich.

After lunch, Coyningham dropped me at the High Street shopping mall, where he said he had run into Soviet visitors in the past. Wandering through the air-conditioned mall, I spotted a half-dozen shops (all run by Indians) with Russian names spelled out in Cyrillic: Chernoe More (Black Sea), Yalta, Nikolaev, Odessa, Nakhodka. There were some 40-50 Soviets shopping there. I guessed they were off a ship. Their ages ran from around 20 to 50, and about one-third were women. Some of them were sitting on couches in the hallway while the others shopped. I noticed that a popular purchase seemed to be a Sanyo stereo radio with cassette recorder that carried meter bands down to 13 meters—ideal for shortwave radio listening. (Soviet sets did not go below 25 meters.) Around the

⁹¹ United States Information Service: the overseas branch of USIA.

corner from the High Street Mall were more shops with Cyrillic names: Moskva, Novorossiysk, and so on. Dropping by next day in the late afternoon, I again found a dozen or more Soviet customers.

The traffic was there, but when I met Irwin Hankins, he confessed that he had not managed to find any potential interviewers. He had tried at the University and had advertised in newspapers for Russian speakers but without success. He still wanted to do the pilot study, and said he would continue his search. We reviewed the questionnaire and went over interviewing techniques that had been successful in other areas. During the conversation Hankins let drop that he was aware of the ESOMAR affair, and that he knew people at ASI in Japan. He was keen to go ahead with the project, and he was anxious to show me how much he knew about SAAOR—but finding interviewers was clearly going to be hard.⁹²

Japan. Interviewers were a problem in Japan as well. Shin-ichi Masagaki had successfully recruited three interviewers: two Russian-speaking Japanese, a man and a woman, and a Brazilian woman living in Japan who had spent six years in Russia.⁹³ He had established cordial relations with the government officials who dealt with travel from communist nations, and was able to find out when Soviet visitors were coming. He had made certain that SAAOR'S work was officially understood and approved.⁹⁴ He had discovered that there were about 4,000 Soviet visitors a year in Japan. They generally came on three-day trips, with the last day left free for shopping in Tokyo.⁹⁵ He had identified their favorite shopping spots near the Akihabara train station where they bought radios with cassette recorders and watches. His interviewers had conducted a few interviews, and also filed about ten contact reports that didn't involve interviews. As yet there was no full-fledged pilot study.

Later in the year, I got a progress report from Bill Hall of ASI Tokyo, who was overseeing the project.⁹⁶ Hall enclosed five completed interviews, some comments on non-completed interviews, and said four more completed interviews would be forthcoming. He noted that the Brazilian lady "really appears to relish the work" but the two Japanese interviewers were held back by cultural inhibitions. I was disappointed. Masagaki, who had the personality and drive to

92 Gene Parta, Memo for the Record, "TDY in Singapore, 24-26 June 1985," 1 July 1985, HIA.

93 Letter from Hall to Parta, 7 January 1985, HIA.

94 Gene Parta, Memo for the Record, "Meeting with Bill Hall of ASI Tokyo in Paris 26 February 1985," 27 February 1985, HIA.

95 Parta hand-written notes on Japan visit, 8 April 1985, HIA.

96 Letter from Hall to Parta, 25 November 1985.

conduct interviews himself, was too busy with his other activities, and it was going to be hard to find Japanese interviewers who were comfortable with this kind of work.

BETTER THAN A TRIP TO RUSSIA!

We continued to broaden the range of our reporting, and began to cover subjects that didn't merit a full-fledged analysis in a series of Research Memoranda instead. Topics covered in 1985 included RL program ratings derived from emigrant data, a comparison of Sallie Wise's reporting of our data on Afghanistan with data from an unofficial Soviet poll, a report on Radio Mayak, and a summary of information on frequencies, audibility, and jamming.

A background report entitled "Radio Operators and Equipment in the USSR"⁹⁷ attracted some highly appreciative responses, including a comment from SRI International (originally the Stanford Research Institute): "It is highly pertinent to our work and is full of useful information... I consider such reports very valuable indeed—they're better than a trip to Russia!"⁹⁸

In 1984, we had looked into increased Soviet fears of nuclear war, and in 1985 we followed it up with a study of Soviet citizens' perceptions of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).⁹⁹ Respondents seemed to be somewhat confused about what exactly SDI involved, but were concerned about what the Soviet government called the "militarization of space." A follow-up study on the danger of nuclear war showed that in the Soviet mind the threat persisted.¹⁰⁰

LINKS WITH OTHER WESTERN BROADCASTERS

SAAOR's relations with other Western broadcasters to the USSR became increasingly close as they came to rely more and more on us for their audience research. We had begun providing basic information to the major stations in the 1970s, and gradually our remit expanded. By 1985 our audience estimates were accepted by all the major broadcasters as the "industry standard." We provided

97 Kathleen Mihalisko, BGR 3-85, "Radio Operators and Equipment in the USSR," May 1985, HIA.

98 Letter from Villard to Fallis, 5 November 1985, HIA.

99 Memo from Wise to Parta. "Soviet Citizens' Perceptions of the Strategic Defense Initiative: Some Preliminary Impressions," 18 April 1985, HIA.

100 Sallie Wise, AR 5-85, "Soviet Public Opinion and the Perceived Danger of Nuclear War: A Threat Persists," December 1985, HIA.

data and analysis as requested to Deutsche Welle, Radio Canada International, Radio Sweden, Radio France International, Vatican Radio, and Kol Israel. With VOA and BBC we had closer ties, and we supplied them both with detailed information on a regular basis.

By the mid-1980s, we were providing BBC and VOA with computer-generated Jamming and Audibility Reports (JARs) every month, as well as individual listener reports (BALEs) for citizens and emigrants. Peter Shinkle, who had joined us in 1983 to work on VOA listener reports, left in 1985, and was replaced by Tanya Gesse. Tanya was the granddaughter of Natalya Gesse, a personal friend of Andrei Sakharov. She had been born in the Soviet Union, emigrated to the US as a child, and spoke excellent Russian, German, and English. She stayed with us for two years, working part-time on audience feedback for VOA, BBC, and RL. Tanya was young, sharp, streetwise, and very bright. She was studying business management at the Schiller International University in Paris, and had a feel for the finer things of Parisian life, such as *truffes au chocolat*, *pains au chocolat*, and the *International Herald Tribune*. A gifted linguist, she went on to a high-flying career as a conference interpreter.¹⁰¹

BBC. On a visit to London in 1984, I had met with executives from the BBC World Service's European and Russian desks, and the head of International Broadcasting Audience Research, Graham Mytton.¹⁰² The meeting with Mytton was extremely productive. We contracted to supply BBC with monthly BALE and JAR reports, and I agreed to let them send an analyst to Paris twice a year to work directly with the data. It was suggested that we might form a consortium along with VOA to set up joint projects in countries such as Afghanistan (VOA later agreed). SAAOR listening data prompted BBC management to carry out major schedule changes, and in 1983 they had issued a research report based on our data entitled "Listening to the BBC by Soviet Residents and Emigrants." BBC staffers became occasional visitors to our Paris office. They included the Surveys Manager, François Delauzan; the Director of the Russian Service, Barry Holland; and the Chief of Russian Features, Frank Williams.

VOA. Cooperation with VOA reached a new level when Mark Rhodes moved to Washington D.C. in the fall of 1985. When I hired Mark in 1980, I had wondered how long he and his family would stick it out in a foreign country. They surpassed expectations by holding out for five years, but by 1985 they were ready

¹⁰¹ E-mails from Tanya Gesse to Patricia Leroy, 20 and 26 July 2020.

¹⁰² Gene Parta, Memo for the Record, "Visit to BBC, 12 July 1984," 16 July 1984, HIA.

to return to the US since their children were approaching school age. We were prepared to keep Mark on payroll in the United States, but first we had to find him an office in Washington. Since RFE/RL's headquarters on Connecticut Avenue had no free space, for the next several years Mark worked out of an office at USIA, VOA's parent organization, while remaining on the RFE/RL payroll.

This kind of arrangement was unprecedented. It grew out of a suggestion made the previous year by the Deputy Director of VOA, Mel Levitsky. Levitsky had wanted to fund a slot in the SAAOR office to carry out research on VOA. RL management had approved the idea, but Mark's desire to move back to the US killed two birds with one stone. I pitched the idea of giving Mark office space in the USIA/VOA building to Sherwood "Woody" Demitz, the head of VOA's audience research unit, on the grounds that it would allow Mark to act as a direct conduit between SAAOR in Paris and USIA/VOA in Washington. Demitz had no objections, and the arrangement was accepted by top management at both RFE/RL and USIA.

In the past, a semi-rivalry had existed between RL and VOA, partly because of an undeclared competition for government funding. This agreement showed that cooperation was also possible. I gave a talk to the Soviet broadcast division of VOA that helped cement good relations. Mark arrived in Washington just before Thanksgiving in 1985 and sent us an e-mail announcing "The Turkey Has Landed!"

VOA was delighted to get their hands on data which was not forthcoming from USIA's Research Department, and Mark was deluged with requests. Woody Demitz gave him access to all the VOA services broadcasting to the USSR (Russian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, Georgian, Armenian, and Azeri), but it was not all plain sailing. The director of the USIA Research Department (who shall be nameless) was annoyed by Mark's presence, and didn't hide it. When Mark was introduced to the Research Department staff, he pointedly kept his back turned. When Mark explained SAAOR's work, he remarked "Garbage In, Garbage Out."¹⁰³ Part of the problem was that VOA had withdrawn some of their funding from USIA surveys (which showed low listener numbers worldwide for VOA) and switched it to SAAOR (which showed relatively high listening rates to VOA in the USSR).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ E-mail from Rhodes to Parta, 9 July 2020.

¹⁰⁴ E-mail from Rhodes to Parta, 10 July 2020.

Radio Sweden. Every five years, the Swedish Foreign Ministry commissioned a study of Radio Sweden's foreign broadcast services. The official in charge of this paid me a visit on October 6, 1985. Hadar Kars was Chairman of the International Council of the Liberal Party of Sweden and a former Minister of Trade.¹⁰⁵ I briefed him and his assistant Karen England on the overall impact of Western radio in the USSR, and the specific role and ranking of Radio Sweden. Just before leaving, Kars suddenly asked if I could give him an estimate of the size of Radio Sweden's Russian-language audience in the USSR. He took me by surprise. I had nothing at hand. I got out a piece of paper and went through a number of steps, comparing Radio Sweden's performance to that of other broadcasters in Western Russia and the Baltics. In the end I gave him reasonable guesstimate, and he asked if he could use it for his Commission. I explained that it was only an extrapolation, and that it would take a computer analysis using the MIT simulation technique to provide an accurate figure. What I hadn't realized was that Radio Sweden's Russian service was under threat. I only found out on my next visit to Stockholm that my guesswork had saved it from possible closure. By demonstrating that it had a measurable audience in the USSR, SAAOR had helped keep it on the air.

A CHANGE IN PRESIDENT

Jim Buckley had arrived at RFE/RL at the end of 1982 with the intention of staying for three years. He stuck to his timetable, announcing well ahead of time that he would be leaving by the end of 1985. When he returned to the US, he was nominated by President Reagan to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, and served on the court with distinction for many years.

I was sad to see Buckley go. He had been a strong supporter of SAAOR in a period of upheaval, he had promoted a balanced approach in the Russian service in difficult times, and I felt he had generally improved morale throughout the organization. Before leaving RFE/RL, he wrote me a letter of commendation for the work of SAAOR, and I had a copy of this placed in the personnel file of each SAAOR staffer.¹⁰⁶ In my farewell note to him I said that the entire SAAOR staff joined me in wishing him all the best for his new life in Washington: "Your support and encouragement of our work has meant a great deal to all of us. The

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Parta to Buckley, 8 October 1985, HIA.

¹⁰⁶ Memo from Parta to Wiest, 9 December 1985, HIA.

example that you set at the head of our organization has restored a sense of pride that we all wish to feel in it.”¹⁰⁷

Buckley was succeeded by Eugene Pell, an experienced journalist who had been Moscow correspondent for NBC and was currently director of VOA. After a short stint in the RFE/RL Washington office in late 1985, Gene Pell arrived in Munich in January 1986.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Parta to Buckley, 22 November 1985, HIA.

F O U R T H M O V E M E N T

Perestroika Changes the Game

1986–1990

f u o c o s o

1986

USSR events

Gorbachev's call for re-structuring (perestroika) leads to liberalization measures but no clear-cut economic policy.

- February: 27th CPSU congress. Gorbachev calls for “radical economic renewal” and perestroika.
- April: Pravda editorial complains of resistance to change.
- April: Explosion destroys reactor at Chernobyl nuclear plant. Event ignored by Soviet media.
- April: Moscow announces defection of RL staffer Oleg Tumanov.
- June: Central Committee Plenum: Gorbachev attacks opponents of reform.
- September: Arrest of US journalist Nicholas Daniloff on charges of espionage.
- October: Reykjavik: Gorbachev summit meeting with Reagan.
- October: Soviet journals publish previously banned works by Gumilev, Nabokov, and others.
- December: Gorbachev invites Sakharov to return from exile in Gorky.
- December: Alma Ata: Rioting when Gorbachev nominates non-Kazakh as First Secretary of Kazakh SSR.

Gorbachev continued to promote his new policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring), but the path of reform was not always smooth—as was demonstrated by the authorities' failure to acknowledge the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, and the arrest of a US journalist on trumped-up charges. Gorbachev's call to Andrei Sakharov announcing the end of his internal exile marked a turning point in the process of liberalization, but the process of economic reform was erratic.

Reform of a different kind was underway at RFE/RL with the arrival of a new President, whose aim was to make the broadcasts more professional. SAAOR would play a major role in this. Traveler interviewing was now underway on three continents. The scale of our operations was such that the occasional setback was inevitable, but by now SAAOR possessed an understanding of the mindset and media behavior of Soviet citizens unmatched by any organization in the West.

A FESTIVE NEW YEAR

1986 started off in style. SAAOR threw a party to celebrate the Russian New Year. Our previous party two years earlier had been a roaring success (though Madeleine, the cleaning lady, didn't think so), and we hoped to do even better this time around. Our guest list included well-known Russian emigré writers such as Viktor Nekrasov and Andrei Sinyavsky; several eminent French professors of Soviet studies; Western journalists from *Le Monde*, *L'Express*, *Stern*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *US News and World Report*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Reader's Digest*, *Le Courrier des pays de l'Est*, and Russian journalists from *Kontinent*, *Sintaksis*, and *Russkaya Mysl'*; representatives of UNESCO, of the US Embassies in Paris and Warsaw, the Society of Central Asian Studies in Oxford, the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, the Canadian Cultural Center, and the recently-founded anti-communist organization Resistance International. Their presence was a tribute to SAAOR's standing in the local Soviet affairs community. Our office on Boulevard St. Germain was possibly the only place in Paris that could draw such a glittering line-up. Completing the assembly were members of RFE/RL staff and management, including employees and freelancers from the RFE/RL news bureau on Avenue Rapp: Syoma Mirsky, Fatima Salkazanova, Lydia Petrouskiene, Sonia Magreblan, and others; and a Munich contingent that included the Executive Vice-President Jay Gildner, the recently nominated RL Director Nick Vaslef, and the new director of the Russian service Constantin Galskoy.

The bar offered both wine and vodka, but most of the Russian guests opted for whisky. Andrei Sinyavsky drank it neat, and his wife Maria took it on the rocks. Sinyavsky's hair was grayer and his posture more stooped than when he left the Soviet Union in 1973, but he cut a charismatic figure among the emigré intellectuals. Masha, ever protective, looked after him like a secret service agent, but couldn't prevent a crowd from gathering to hear him hold forth on Soviet events and express approval of Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign—glass in hand. Viktor Nekrasov,

raised in Ukraine, lamented the loss of the Ukrainian language, which he felt was dying. "Anyone with any ambition in Ukraine sticks to Russian," he said.

The French actress Simone Signoret had recently died, and Nekrasov noted that she had only got a two-line obituary in the Soviet journal *Literaturnaya gazeta*, even though she and her husband Yves Montand had once been prominent left-wing sympathizers: "Once you break with communism you're a non-person," he commented. A couple of years earlier, Lynne and I had been invited to represent Radio Liberty at a small dinner with Signoret and Montand. Unfortunately, we were on home leave in the US at the time, and Syoma Mirsky took our place. We were both fans of theirs and would have loved a personal evening together.

PROFESSIONALISM TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER CONFRONTATION

A few days earlier, we had received another eminent visitor. The new President of RFE/RL, Gene Pell, stopped over in Paris to visit SAAOR and the RFE/RL news bureau. Lynne and I were invited out to dinner by Gene and his wife Linda, and we spent the evening getting to know each other. Linda was charming. Pell was cordial, but clearly a media personality. He had been the Moscow correspondent for NBC, and I noticed that he instinctively held his head and modulated his deep baritone voice as if getting ready for a television appearance. Pell was familiar with our reports from his time as VOA Director. He expressed a high opinion of our work, and seemed like a good successor to Jim Buckley. I was looking forward to working with him.

What I remember most about that dinner was Pell's emphasis on the need to raise the professional level of RL's broadcasts. As an old television and radio hand, he made it clear that this was his main objective. He asked how I saw my own career development, and I said that, since we had collected so much fascinating data, I was thinking of taking a short sabbatical to write about it from a broader perspective. He said he would not be opposed to granting me a leave of absence. As it turned out, there was so much going on in the office that I never took him up on it.

Pell made other key management changes in the course of the year. In the fall of 1986, he brought in William W. Marsh, another old broadcasting hand. Marsh came to RFE/RL from RIAS in Berlin.¹ He had earlier served as Director of VOA's Central News Department, and as Deputy News Director at RFE. As a professional newsman, he was well equipped to carry out Pell's objectives. Marsh

1 Radio in the American Sector. This was widely heard in East Berlin and nearby parts of the DDR.

replaced Jay Gildner as Executive Vice President for Programs and Policy, and SAAOR reported directly to him.

The Director of Radio Liberty, George Bailey, had left the radio in 1985, and Pell promoted the deputy director, Nicholas Vaslef, to replace him. Vaslef, of Russian descent, was a military man but also an academic who held a Ph.D. in Russian from Harvard. He had served in the US Air Force, attaining the rank of colonel; acted as Chief of the Soviet-Warsaw Pact Division at the Defense Intelligence Agency; and been Director of the Soviet Area Studies Program at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Unlike his predecessor, Vaslef was always open to SAAOR research. It was a welcome change.

Change was underway in Washington too. Frank Shakespeare had left to become US Ambassador to Portugal in mid-1985, and his role as chairman of the BIB had been taken over by Malcom S. Forbes, the magazine publisher. All the hardline ideologues at the management level and the BIB had left the scene. By the end of 1986, we had a completely new management team. Forbes and Pell were conservative but pragmatic Republicans, and their political beliefs were never an issue. The new managers were professionals. Partisan politics was a thing of the past. Forbes frequently cited SAAOR findings in his public and private utterances. Everyone was focused on the mission of the Radios. Ideology took a back seat but the radios did not weaken their focus on human rights.

SAAOR MAKES DIRECT CONTRIBUTION TO RL BROADCASTS

Pell's first step towards increasing the professional level of the Radios was to inaugurate a new and rigorous program review procedure. This was what he had done at VOA. All the broadcast services would be subjected to regular reviews, with input from senior managers and programmers, and also audience research. The service would not be given prior notice of a review: "The goal is, simply stated: across-the-board improvement in all services."²

George Bailey's idea of a program review had been an informal chat in his office with the service director, without benefit of input from SAAOR or anyone else. Breaking with this nonchalant approach, Pell wrote:

Audience research is ... another area of large investment and substantial return. We can question their methodology and even their conclusions (pro-

² Memo from Pell to RFE/RL Staff, "Program Review," 3 January 1986, HIA.

vided empirical evidence to the contrary is available) but we cannot simply ignore their findings. Those findings must be explored, debated and applied.

Members of the service review panel would be provided with up-to-date audience research data, along with analyses of program content and production for the preceding two weeks, supplied by the Broadcast Analysis Department.

Given the large number of services broadcasting to the USSR, preparing for these reviews was a major undertaking. We were obliged to reorient our research agenda and increase the number of Listener Panel Reviews. SAAOR was expected to make a presentation at each service review, and we were assigned an office in the Public Affairs department for our use in Munich. For each service review we provided data on estimated audience size, demographic make-up, trends in listening, listener behavior, and the state of the competition, whether foreign or domestic. When logistics permitted, we provided a Listener Panel Review. Our material was received with considerable interest. (Pell's injunction about questioning our methodology was never invoked.) Programmers were anxious for information on their audience, and SAAOR contributions were respected and welcomed. For the first time in our existence, we were now contributing directly to the broadcast operations of RFE/RL. It was a new and heady feeling.

CHERNOBYL DISASTER CONFIRMS INCREASING USE OF WESTERN RADIO

On April 26, 1986, Reactor no. 4 at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant exploded, scattering radioactive fallout throughout Ukraine and as far as Western Europe. (In Paris, we were happily unaffected, since the French authorities had assured the population that radiation fallout stopped at the Rhine.) I was in Munich, at a luncheon with BIB members, when we heard the news. I was sitting near Prof. Robert Conquest of Stanford University, who had been talking about the Holodomor, the great Ukrainian famine of the 1930s, in which millions died. It was a weird coincidence that another disaster should be unfolding in Ukraine at the same time. In the West we heard the news before most of the USSR, since it took Soviet media several days to acknowledge what had happened. Nothing had changed since the KAL disaster three years earlier. Over the next several weeks, they reported on the accident in fits and starts, often contradicting what had been said before.

As soon as I heard about the accident, I phoned the office and arranged for a survey question to be added to our Soviet traveler interviews. We asked respondents if they were aware of the disaster, where they first heard about it, and where they turned for additional information. We garnered 528 responses over the next two months. We couldn't use the MIT simulation program on such a small sample, but we analyzed the unweighted data to compare sources of information used in the aftermath of the disaster, and the degree of credibility attributed to each. Soviet official circles provided no complete account of the accident until August, when a somber report was presented to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The information vacuum provided an excellent test case. Where did Soviet citizens turn for information on breaking news? Sallie Wise did a preliminary analysis of the unweighted data. Western radio was cited as the first source of information by 36% of our respondents.³ It was followed by Soviet TV at 28%, and word-of-mouth at 15%. Even after Soviet media began to provide some (sketchy) information on the accident, our respondents continued to turn to Western radio for fuller details. Thirteen percent of the sample used Western radio as an additional source after first hearing the news on Soviet media. In all, nearly half (49%) of the survey group of 528 respondents used Western radio as an information source on the disaster.

It was clear that Soviet citizens had developed the habit of turning on Western radio when USSR media was slow in reporting on a major event, or unforthcoming with details of what was happening. Our listening trend reports for the previous year had shown that audiences to Western broadcasters were on the increase. Western radio was now a standard fixture in the USSR media landscape.

This conclusion was indirectly corroborated by official sources within the USSR. Our former consultant Prof. Ellen Mickiewicz was in contact with several Soviet communications specialists in the context of her research into the impact of Soviet television on society. In a conversation with Mark Rhodes, she said that, based on what they had told her, the audience to Western radio appeared to be growing.⁴

3 Sallie Wise with Patricia Leroy, "The Chernobyl Disaster: Sources of Information and Reactions," AR 4-86, October 1986, HIA.

4 Letter from Parta to Pell, 22 April 1986, HIA.

DEFECTOR TUMANOV LAUNCHES ATTACK ON SAAOR

Two days after the Chernobyl explosion, Radio Liberty was shaken by a second incident. On April 28, Oleg Tumanov, the acting editor-in-chief of the Russian service, who had disappeared from his job in Munich two months earlier, resurfaced at a news conference in Moscow, and told the press that RL was an intelligence operation whose purpose was to subvert the Soviet state. Reading from a prepared statement, he said that his 20 years in the West had been a nightmare. The language recalled that of other returning defectors. Tumanov had defected from the Soviet Union twenty years earlier: he had jumped ship off Libya in 1965 while in service as a military conscript, and eventually been hired by Radio Liberty.

Declaring that the radio's executive staff included several US intelligence officers, he went on:

But I can name a whole department which works directly under the CIA's control. The address is 193 Saint-Germain Boulevard, Paris. Located there is the so-called audience research department. It is headed by CIA officer Gene Parta. Similar offices in Vienna, Rome, Copenhagen, Duesseldorf, Hamburg, Salzburg and elsewhere also report to him. The department and its affiliates gather and process information on issues of interest to the CIA and the defense intelligence agency and approach Soviet citizens on visits abroad with the aim of cultivating and possibly recruiting them.⁵

That our office was under CIA control was obviously nonsense, but the French press picked up on it at once, and *Le Monde*, *Liberation*, and *L'Humanité* were among those who reprinted our address in their editions of April 29. *L'Humanité*, the communist newspaper, apparently not big on fact-checking or transliteration, identified me as a "fonctionnaire américain, Jim Barter." Coming hard on the heels of the Chernobyl disaster, this attack took a toll on staff nerves. We took to peering out of the windows to check the boulevard. We looked both ways before stepping through the outer door, and thought twice about venturing out to the *charcuterie* on Rue du Bac to pick up something for lunch. We felt vulnerable. For once we were thankful for Kroshka's barking when the tin-can elevator reached our sixth-floor eyrie.

5 Moscow TASS in English 1121 GMT 28 Apr 86, "Former Radio Liberty Employee Holds Press Conference."

Tumanov embroidered further on the espionage theme in subsequent appearances. In a television appearance on May 4, he claimed that RL director Nicholas Vaslef and Russian service director Vladimir Galscoy [sic], were both “seasoned US military intelligence officers,” and he again mentioned the Department of Audience Research, directed by Jean [sic] Parta and Charles Allen, “both CIA officers.”⁶

Finally, in a televised roundtable discussion on June 3, he referred to “Gene Parta, a trained American intelligence officer, and Charles Allan [sic] also a trained American intelligence officer, although his cover is that he is an Oxford graduate,” cited our address again, and went on to depict our interviewing project as a sinister attempt to gather military information from unsuspecting Soviets. These claims, which verged on the ridiculous to a Western ear, might sound all too convincing to the unsophisticated listener in Arkhangelsk or Vladivostok. It was unnerving.

Tumanov claimed that emigrants in Rome and Vienna were “checked over” by American intelligence: “It is not just a check over, but a gathering of information. Parta’s bureau [...] gathers information required by the radio station [...] But at the same time—I saw these questionnaires—people are asked questions on quite different issues. These could be questions... of a military nature, in particular [...] And immigrants are subjected to obligatory questioning.”

It goes without saying that we never asked specifically for “military” or indeed any other information that could be interpreted in this way. Information was always volunteered spontaneously by the respondent, and the interview was in no way obligatory. Interestingly, no mention was made of the Israeli project.

Soviet citizens too might be “approached and introduced. All the people who work with Parta speak excellent Russian, and perhaps indirectly they gain their confidence, perhaps all kinds of different methods are used, but nevertheless they try to get information...” But, most nefarious of all: “Parta’s bureau in Paris on Boulevard St. Germain is equipped with a special computer, thanks to which information is also summarized along certain parameters, including those which interest the American ... military.”⁷

Despite Tumanov’s much-publicized redefection, his attack on the Radios, and his insistence on SAAOR’s quest for “military information,” the KGB never made any coordinated effort to shut us down. Neither our office nor our staff

6 Moscow Television Service in Russian 1400 GMT 4 May 86.

7 Moscow Television Service in Russian 1740 GMT 3 Jun 86.

were ever physically attacked, and even media attacks were relatively few and far between. At some point I was awarded the rank of Colonel in a Soviet press article, to the great glee of the staff, and on another occasion our address was again made public by the French right-wing gutter-journal *Minute*, but most of the time they left us alone. The truth was that we were probably useful to them. They could not obtain the kind of information we gathered from any other source. Opinion polls were not commonplace in the USSR: they were considered a bourgeois science. They had few ways of tapping into their population's opinions, attitudes, and media consumption other than what we provided. Studies at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences had to be careful to avoid sensitive topics. A USIA officer visiting the USSR Academy of Sciences in the mid-1980s spotted a copy of one of our reports lying in plain view on the desk of a sociological researcher. Our reports had distinctive blue covers and there was no mistaking them. The subject of this one was a Sallie Wise report on attitudes to Afghanistan. No comment was made, but the message was obvious. Soviet researchers had access to our reports and were not disputing their findings.

In 1993, Tumanov published a book whose English title was *Confessions of a KGB Agent*. It covered much of the same ground as his 1986 press conferences and television appearances, and was no doubt helped along by a KGB ghost-writer, but the moment had gone, and it failed to have much impact.

ENTER THE BOLSHEVAX

Tumanov's "special computer" that "summarized information" was about to get a new caregiver and an upgrade. In the spring of 1986, our computer expert, Roselyn Romberg, announced that she was returning to the US to pursue graduate studies at MIT. Roselyn had done a lot to move our computer capacity forward, and we were sorry to lose her. Fortunately, we landed on our feet. Richard Brooks of the Munich Computer Center, who had spent time at SAAOR to assist with equipment upgrades, applied for the job, and was accepted. He moved to Paris on July 1. Richard was one of the most capable people in the Munich computer operation, and we were fortunate to have him on board.

Richard held a BA in mathematical sciences from Johns Hopkins University, and had worked as an engineering programmer at the Goddard Space flight center laboratory at NASA before joining RFE/RL as a Systems Programmer in 1981. He had extensive training in the DEC VAX/VMS systems that we used in the office and, at the time of his transfer, was Manager of Systems/Application

Author in front of the building on Boulevard St. Germain which had an attractive interior garden.



Programming in the RFE/RL Computer Center. He and his German wife Birgit inherited Roselyn's extremely well-located apartment on Rue des Écoles in the Latin Quarter, where Charlie had also lived a few years earlier.

With Richard as our in-house specialist, seconded by Roselyn and John Klenzin at MIT, and Janet Asanchev in Paris, we had a first-rate team running a state-of-the-art computer operation on our newly-installed VAX 730 network—familiarly known in-house as the Bolshevax. (The printer was named Lolita.) One of Richard's first tasks was to codify all the necessary procedures relating to the computer system in an eight-page manual. Our computing needs were complex and it was essential to have clear instructions in case problems arose in his absence. Besides the Bolshevax, we worked with computers at MIT and EDS (Electronic Data Services). EDS hosted the Consistent System, which was our main data analysis package, since it was no longer available at MIT.

To house the VAX, we ripped out the rather seedy bathroom in our St. Germain apartment (pink and green décor and an antiquated tub), and replaced it with a gleaming air-conditioned sound-proofed computer room. The office sud-

denly looked much more businesslike. The new machine affected both our word-processing routines and our communications capabilities. Up until then we had been using a distinctly fiddly word-processing system called WordStar, but now we switched to LEX-11, a German-developed system which was used in Munich. Alison Dalgity of the Munich Computer Center came to Paris in September 1986 to conduct a training course in the new system. For the first time, we had e-mail links with everyone in Munich, and with Mark in Washington. The e-mail system was hosted in Munich on the Mini-VAX 725, the forerunner of the VAX-730, which had previously been housed in our office. SAAOR's in-house computing system had been ahead of Munich from the start, and we had in many respects served as trailblazer for the radios.

Only data transmission lagged behind. In those pre-Internet days, international data transmission wasn't easy. We were obliged to use the French Telenet link to send data to MIT and EDS, even though the service was sometimes poor, and it suffered from congestion, frequent breakdowns, and high costs. We explored the possibility of utilizing the US Arpanet system (the forerunner of the Internet), but the nearest node was in London, at University College.⁸ The French would not allow us to access UCL with Telenet (dial-up was not permitted outside the country), nor was it possible to install a dedicated line from SAAOR in Paris to UCL in London (the French state telephone system shot that one down). So we were stuck with Telenet.

BASEBALL PLAYER RECRUITED FOR DATA ENTRY

As in previous years, the volume of interviews was such that we needed constant outside help to enter interview data into the computer. Nicole continued to play a central role, logging in questionnaires as they arrived, and distributing them to the appropriate staffer or intern for processing. From June to November 1986, data entry was handled by John Freedman, a former professional baseball player with the Tri-Cities Ports in Washington state. John had a Masters in Russian from George Washington University, and was working on a PhD in Slavic Languages and Literature. We met at Harvard: I was looking for interns, and he was anxious to take a leave of absence from grad school. Of his time at SAAOR he recalls: "My brief stint at SAAOR was just that—brief, and I was pretty much a manual laborer. I don't think I was entrusted with taking out the trash, but I was

8 Telex from Romberg to Parta, 15 February 1985, HIA.

kind of on that level. Nicole would send me for cheese and wine on Friday afternoons...”⁹ After leaving SAAOR, John completed his doctorate on the playwright Nikolai Erdman, and then moved to Moscow. The one-time “manual laborer” became a respected figure in the world of Moscow theater, married a prominent Russian actress, and worked as theater critic for *The Moscow Times* from 1992 to 2015.

IN THE FIELD

1986 saw a major expansion of field work. We now had two full-time staff members concentrating on field work (Charlie Allen and Slavko Martyniuk), with occasional input from our national minorities specialist Kathy Mihalisko. By now SAAOR was conducting about 4,500 interviews a year with travelers from the USSR.

WESTERN EUROPE

Finland. After a temporary halt in 1984, KPR-Marketing was back at work with a reduced interviewing team. There was a high level of Soviet traffic to Finland. In the new, more relaxed atmosphere that followed the introduction of perestroika at the 27th Party Congress, respondents appeared to be eager to talk.

Vienna. The experiment with the open questionnaire was continuing, but some of the interviews had failed to meet the required standard of consistency and had been excluded from the database.¹⁰ In itself, this was not unusual. Interviews conducted in the pilot phase of an institute often showed inconsistencies, as did those conducted by new interviewers. A common anomaly was listening rates that were too high for a given station. In the case of Vienna, this was Radio Liberty.

In April, Charlie went to Vienna to get to the root of the problem.¹¹ He talked first to the institute director, Helmut Aigner, who had also noticed the discrepancy; then to the four interviewers in Aigner’s presence; then to each of the interviewers alone. It turned out that the interviewers, who were all East Europeans, had previously worked on EEAOR interviewing for RFE and mistakenly thought

⁹ E-mails from John Freedman to Patricia Leroy, 19 and 25 July 2020.

¹⁰ For more information on consistency checks, see above, “Cross-Checking the Data,” in chapter on 1982.

¹¹ Charles Allen, Memo for the Record “Vienna TDY of April 2-4,” 7 April 1986, HIA.

that the aim of our project was to get as much information as possible on Radio Liberty. This had obviously led to a biased approach. It was unheard of for RL to have almost twice as many listeners as the now un-jammed VOA. Charlie and Aigner explained to the interviewers that the point of the project was to collect data that accurately reflected listening patterns to all the stations. Once this had been clarified, the problem went away.

Aigner had found a contact to provide him with schedules for the tour ships that brought Soviet tourists to the city, which were more numerous than the previous year.¹² In July 1986, a total of 3,500 Soviet citizens visited Vienna, not including the crews. That was the good news. The bad news was that the tourists' customary full free day in Vienna had been reduced, which made it harder for the interviewers to strike up an acquaintance. With only half a day at leisure, the travelers were obliged to stay with their groups, and were no longer free to go shopping at the cheap stores that catered to Soviet tourists at Mexikoplatz. Aigner and his team had to work out new ways to make contact.

Denmark. In June, Charlie and Slavko made a joint trip to Copenhagen to introduce Slavko to the operation.¹³ Before meeting the interviewers, Slavko went on his own to the Polish shops where the Soviet travelers went. He watched a number of interviews taking place, and noted how the interviewers shifted smoothly from inoffensive small talk to the topic of radio listening and media use, and moved into the interview from there.

Slavko had been born in West Ukraine, and in one of the shops he posed as a Ukrainian tourist:

While in Bazar 2, [interviewer] CHVS approached me directly but in a very natural way. He let me browse for a while and, before I realized it, [interviewer] LI was standing next to me trying to engage me in casual conversation. LI's approach was also quite smooth; he offered me a couple of small gifts... and in spite of the fact that I was reticent, in 20 minutes he managed to extract most of the essential information about my radio listening habits. He switched to the subject of radio rather easily as we were talking about Chernobyl... I describe this episode in some detail because it illustrates several important points: the natural and easygoing approach of both CHVS and LI; the degree of cooperation between the interviewers; and LI's cau-

¹² Letter from Aigner to Allen, 11 August 1986, HIA.

¹³ Charles Allen, Memo for the Record, "TDY to Denmark: June 7-13," 2 July 1986, HIA.

tious reaction to an unusual situation. Taken together this demonstrated that I was dealing with interviewers who were professional and prudent...¹⁴

When the “Ukrainian tourist” showed up that evening at the institute meeting, CHVS and LI were dumbfounded!

Charlie and Slavko met with all the interviewers separately to review their work. This was the cornerstone of the operation, as Slavko came to understand. Interviewing was a difficult and sometimes lonely task, and it was important for interviewers to have regular meetings with the project supervisors to get feedback, critiques, praise, and appreciation. It made them feel a vital part of a much larger whole.

Later in the year, Slavko made a second trip to Copenhagen to deal with problems caused by CHVS.¹⁵ Some of the other interviewers had complained about him to the institute director. CHVS had a bellicose personality, and wasn’t always easy to get along with. He subscribed to the American periodical *Soldier of Fortune*, which reported on worldwide warfare, and had a penchant for camo clothing. He was prompt to criticize the work of his colleagues, and was thought to be too friendly with people from the Soviet Embassy. Slavko listened patiently to what everyone had to say, and concluded that the issues would probably blow over (which they did).

France. The first part of the year was marked by problems with VS, a key Paris interviewer, who had worked for Field Service for several years. At the end of 1985, alarmed by his increasing unreliability, Michèle Leroy had lowered his quota. In February 1986, VS sent me a handwritten note complaining that his quota was too low, and asking for a meeting. It was not normal procedure to go over the head of the institute, and I didn’t respond. In April 1986, he sent a long, rambling, not very rational letter to me, Charlie, and Kathy, again asking for more work. Michèle thought he was angling for a job that paid a guaranteed wage to support his young family, even though he must have known that, given the nature of the work, this wasn’t possible.

Meanwhile, he had persuaded Charlie to go with him to a series of meetings, apparently with the aim of illustrating his ease of access to visiting Soviets, and his value to the project. In January, he took Charlie to the Gare du Nord to meet

14 Memo from Martyniuk to Parta via Allen, “Copenhagen Mission, 7 to 13 June 1986,” 17 June 1986, HIA.

15 Slavko Martyniuk. Memo for the Record, “Summary of Events Leading up to the Present Conflict with CHVS,” 29 October 1986, HIA.

a group arriving by train from Moscow. They had talked to the group supervisor, who displayed what Charlie called “the classical Soviet demeanor — flashy smiles hiding hatred, friendliness cloaking distrust, and a phony casualness disguising inbred nervousness.” They met a Soviet woman married to a French engineer, and VS engaged her in a lengthy conversation about the situation in Poland and the war in Afghanistan, but then threw her off balance by referring to Charlie as alternately Canadian and American. In February, VS took Charlie backstage at the Palais des Congrès to meet a visiting Georgian dance troupe. They attended a Soviet-French handball meet, where VS mingled easily with the team after the game. They went to the France-URSS Friendship Society to meet some young French communists who had recently returned from a trip to the USSR. But Field Service did not increase his quota. In response, he simply dropped out of sight. In May, Michèle Leroy informed Charlie that her phone calls to his apartment had gone unanswered.¹⁶ VS was gone from the project.

Field Service replaced him with AFS, a Soviet emigré who had been in Paris for a number of years, and had had briefly worked on the project in 1979. She had easy access to visiting Soviets through a translation bureau which dealt with Soviet travelers.¹⁷ Her first efforts were satisfactory. She ascribed her success to her tactic of leading into a conversation with the opinion questions, and working round to the media questions later.

Our other French interviewer ADM resumed work in the fall of 1986 after a one-year break. Anne-Danièle was an experienced hand who often accompanied Soviet travel groups and had natural access.¹⁸

EASTERN EUROPE

Yugoslavia. In the summer of 1985, Kathy had made the acquaintance of SR, a Serbian university professor specialized in the literature of the non-Russian peoples of the USSR, especially Ukrainian. SR was highly regarded by his peers in both Europe and America.¹⁹ He traveled regularly between Paris and Yugoslavia. Kathy told him she was working on a project to learn how Soviets used foreign radio to gain information, and SR expressed interest in participating. He regularly

16 Charles Allen, Memo for the Record, “Conversation with Michèle Leroy,” 22 May 1986, HIA.

17 Charles Allen, Memo For The Record, “Meeting with Field Marketing,” 21 November 1986, HIA. (Field Service had changed its name to Field Marketing, to reflect the widening range of its activities.)

18 Letter from Allen to Sondage Service, 19 September 1986, HIA.

19 Memo from Mihalisko to Parta, “Interviewer in Yugoslavia,” 18 September 1985, HIA.

met Soviet scholars visiting Yugoslavia, and attended conferences with Soviet colleagues. He had easy access to non-Russian intellectuals, and even invited them to his home. Kathy gave him a thorough briefing on how to proceed.

SR turned out to be a highly effective interviewer. He came to Paris in April 1986, bringing several questionnaires, as well as copious notes on religious sects in Russia, and growing popular disenchantment with the war in Afghanistan.²⁰ Although his work was of excellent quality, we decided not to integrate his interviews in the main Soviet citizen database. For one thing, he was interviewing an atypical sample of non-Russian intellectuals. For another, we had no survey research institute in Yugoslavia to handle his work. The data had to be handed to Kathy in the course of occasional meetings in Paris. We entered his interviews in a separate database that was used for qualitative purposes only. SR proved to be a valuable source of listening data among non-Russians, and he contributed interviews for several years.

Eastern Mediterranean. A new Swiss-Israeli company, IMA (International Media Analysis), contacted us in 1984 with a proposal for interviewing Soviet citizens in the Eastern Mediterranean. The areas under consideration included Cyprus, Yugoslavia, and Romania, all of which had considerable Soviet tourist traffic. IMA proposed sending trained interviewers from Israel to conduct the interviews in Russian or other Soviet languages. The interviewers were emigrants from the USSR. Up until now, our institutes had handled only interviews in their respective countries, but this cross-border procedure would allow us to reach Soviet travelers who did not go to Western Europe, including a sizeable contingent of non-Russians. We consulted Munich management, who saw no security or policy problems.²¹ Charlie went to Israel to help train the interviewers. A small pilot study was successful, and in 1986 interviewing was expanded. The results surpassed our expectations. With a competent team of interviewers, professionally trained in Israel, we were able to take full advantage of Soviet tourist traffic in Eastern Europe.

Initial efforts were concentrated mainly on Romania, with some additional work in Bulgaria and Hungary. Since it was fairly easy for Israeli interviewers to work in Eastern Europe, Cyprus was dropped from the project. As we had hoped, 75% of the interviewees were non-Russian. The range of Western radio listening

20 Memo from Mihalisko to Parta, "Project 31 in Yugoslavia," 25 April 1986, HIA.

21 Parta, Gene. Memo for the Record, "Meetings with Cummings and Gildner on Israel Interviewing Project," 17 September 1985, HIA.

was similar to what we had found in Western Europe, except that Radio Liberty ranked closer to VOA, followed by BBC and Deutsche Welle. Since RL had more broadcasts in national minority languages, this was to be expected.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH SHIN BET

And then the director of IMA, who was an Israeli, got an unexpected summons from Shin Bet, commonly known by its acronym Shabak, the Israeli internal security agency. The summons arrived by mail, and looked like a convocation for a routine military-service interview. He had to go to an office in the center of Tel Aviv, where he was subjected to a four-and-a-half hour interrogation by two agents. "It was," he noted later, "emotionally challenging."²² One of the agents was burly, but no physical threats or violence were applied. They did not strike him as Soviet affairs experts. The director explained that he was working with RFE/RL Research, and stressed that he was gathering information to do with radio listening. The interrogators countered that RFE/RL was funded by the CIA. He told them that the arrangement had been discontinued in 1971, and the Radios were now funded by the US Congress. They didn't believe him, but they let him go.

He got the impression that Shabak didn't want the Russians to know that Israel was allowing an activity that could be interpreted as hostile. The USSR had cut off diplomatic ties with Israel during the Six-Day War in 1967, but Israel was anxious to restore the links, partly to ensure that Jewish emigration would be allowed to continue, and partly because the USSR provided enemies of Israel such as the PLO, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, with weapons, supplies, training, and diplomatic support in the UN. Relations were finally restored in 1991.

The director and I took a walk on the beach in Tel Aviv to discuss our next move. We considered who might intervene on our behalf. I decided to go on working with IMA for the time being. But unbeknownst to me, we had a guardian angel. A short time later Victor Grayevsky of Kol Israel contacted me to say that the Shabak affair had been sorted out and our work could continue. Apparently Shabak had queried him about the project. He had set them straight, and pointed out that it benefited Kol Israel too. "Why didn't you come to me right away?" asked Victor. It was a good question. The answer was that I was unaware

22 As this was a sensitive security issue, the director of IMA has requested not to be identified by name here.

of any special relations that Victor might have with Shabak. IMA heard nothing more, and there was no further contact.

PROGRESS IN ASIA

Japan. In May I flew round the world. I went from Paris to Boston to Washington to Los Angeles to Tokyo to Singapore and back to Paris. It saved making separate trips to the US and Asia, and came out a lot cheaper. After consultations in Boston at Harvard and MIT, and meetings in Washington, I stopped over in LA for a night to catch my breath. Next day I took a trans-Pacific flight to Tokyo. Masagaki picked me up at the airport and took me to the hotel, where the reception was chilly because I had forgotten the international date line and was a day late for my reservation. Masagaki convinced the hotel not to penalize me. The room they gave me was a small but efficient one-piece plastic shell. I'd never seen anything like it. I fell asleep at once. Next morning, I ran into one of my former professors from SAIS, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, who had been a counselor at the State Department under Henry Kissinger in the 1970s. He recognized me, and we had a brief chat in the hotel lobby. Sonnenfeldt had been an example for me in the Soviet field, and seemed pleased to hear that I now worked for Radio Liberty.

My first meeting was with Bill Hall, the project supervisor. Hall had sent us 20 pilot interviews, which Charlie judged acceptable. Even though the cultural context was quite different from Europe, the interviewers had made considerable progress since the pilot began, and seemed likely to improve with experience.²³ Hall agreed that it was time to move into a second, developmental phase of 40 interviews, though he felt that Masagaki was not staying on top of the interviewing as much as he should.²⁴

In the Japanese context, the human factor was crucial. When I met Masagaki, we reviewed the interviewers' work, and I stressed how important it was to establish rapport between interviewer and respondent. I also encouraged him to develop personal relationships with his interviewers to maintain their morale. One evening, one of the interviewers joined us for dinner at a well-known sushi restaurant near Tokyo harbor. The floor was covered with wood shavings, and there were fish tanks everywhere. We all ordered sashimi. The live fish was

23 Memo from Allen to Parta, "Japan Interviews," 12 May 1986, HIA.

24 Gene Parta, Memo for the Record, "Field Trip to Japan, 27 May -1 June 1986," HIA.

brought directly from tank to table, a couple of slices were deftly taken out of the back and put on our plates, and the fish went back in the tank. It didn't get fresher than that!

Singapore. My next stop was Singapore, where Irwin Hankins, the project supervisor, was working on a pilot. When I met him the previous year, I had been skeptical about his ability to recruit and train capable interviewers. I hadn't been wrong. He had managed to conduct a number of pilot interviews, but it was clear that we would have to take a more hands-on approach to training and managing interviewers.

Our solution was to hire a Ukrainian academic, Dr. Ivan Myhul, who had been in the same class as Slavko in the DP camp in Regensburg in 1948. Myhul was a professor of Russian Studies at Bishop's University in Sherbrooke, Quebec, but was currently on leave and living in Belgium. He was a good fit for the job we had in mind, and not averse to spending time in Southeast Asia. He came to Paris for training, and left for Singapore in the fall of 1986 for an initial six-month stint. On arrival, he established himself as a non-stipendiary Fellow of the Institute for South-East Asian Studies, a local think tank, working on a project called *Soviet Perceptions of South-East Asia*.²⁵ This gave him a good reason for accosting Soviet travelers in Singapore. He made some contacts at the University of Singapore, and attended seminars there to justify his presence.

Myhul met Hankins, the project supervisor, and began to scout the situation. The Russian-speaking shops in the High Street shopping mall were still heavily frequented by Soviets, but there were more sailors and scientists than tourists. He conducted a number of interviews himself, while keeping a lookout for people he could recruit and train as interviewers. Unfortunately he was doing so many interviews himself that he didn't have time to put together a team. He had some luck with a Chinese lady who worked in one of the shops that catered to Russians, but then noticed that Soviet embassy personnel were constantly dropping by, and realized he could not be seen in the mall too frequently.

The early months of Myhul's stay in Singapore were frustrating for him, partly because the interviewing proceeded more slowly than he had expected, and partly because his relations with Hankins were thorny. Since he was an academic and Hankins was a businessman, a clash was probably inevitable. To Myhul's relief, a new interview site opened up, and he was able to divert his energies elsewhere.

²⁵ Letter from Institute of Southeast Asian Studies to Myhul, 24 October 1986, HIA.

India. Jay Gildner had done some preliminary research for us in India in the fall of 1985, and Hankins had also made some contacts. Gildner provided us with a detailed report on Soviet travel patterns, and recommended possible institutes. One of them was Market Research and Advisory Services, a prestigious survey research firm located in Bombay, now Mumbai. Hankins had been in touch with them too, and it was decided that MRAS would function as a sub-contractor of Marcon Pacific (Hankins' company) in Bombay and Delhi. Hankins went to Bombay in June 1986 to get the ball rolling. MRAS had already started recruiting interviewers. Hankins screened the interviewers, gave them some preliminary training, and provided the plan for the pilot study. But then there was a hitch. It was inevitable that some candidates would drop out of the recruiting process when they realized the project would be harder than they thought, and that others would be rejected for failing to meet our standards. In August, Hankins wrote: "One of the ones rejected by us in Bombay has very kindly started a rumor that we all work for the CIA, and unfortunately the more naïve ones believed this. My Indian colleagues are now attempting to repair the damage."²⁶

We were already preparing to send a Russian-speaking representative to Bombay and Delhi to conduct follow-up training.²⁷ Ivan Myhul traveled to India to evaluate and train the recruits that were left.²⁸ Most of them were university students specializing in Russian studies. All of them could work in both Russian and English. The training Myhul gave them was extremely thorough. One of his training techniques was to stage a mock interview. One of the potential interviewers would play the part of a particularly difficult Soviet tourist, while the other candidates attempted one by one to conduct the interview. This helped to pinpoint which questions might pose problems, and which approaches might be successful. Myhul also gave them about five hours of lectures on various aspects of Soviet society, such as history, politics, economics, and society, spaced out over several days. He gave them information on Soviet tourism in India (gleaned from Jay Gildner's report). He accompanied interviewers into the field and observed them at work. MRAS had assigned an excellent supervisor to the project, and Myhul felt that, with a little experience, the interviewing team would be very successful.

²⁶ Letter from Hankins to Parta, 14 August 1986, HIA.

²⁷ Gene Parta, Memorandum for the Record, "India Project," 11 June 1986, HIA.

²⁸ Myhul letter to Parta, hand-written, 25 October 1986, HIA.

INTERVIEWING IN NEW YORK

The U.S. was never a major interviewing field, but on occasion we conducted interviews in New York. When Florence Pitts, who had been on our staff in the early 1980s, moved to New York, she established her own Institute, Field Research Inc., in Brooklyn and undertook episodic interviewing there. Field Research's interviews were never included in our regular database because their sample was skewed. Soviet visitors to New York were predominantly officials, and a large proportion of them were CP members. Of the 60 interviews conducted in New York in 1983, 78% were Party members. The rank order of the stations heard was similar to that found in other samples: first VOA, followed by BBC, RL, Deutsche Welle, and Radio Sweden. Comments tended to be critical. But what was significant was the fact that fairly high-ranking Soviet officials listened regularly to Western radio stations.

Another New York operation we sometimes worked with was INSEARCH Inc., which was focused on Lithuanians. It had been founded in 1984 by Juozas Kazlas and Rasa Lisauskas. Lisauskas and Kazlas were Americans of Lithuanian extraction, who had good contacts with Lithuanians visiting New York and Chicago. In addition to interviewing travelers, INSEARCH talked to Westerners who had been to the USSR, especially Lithuania. The data from their interviews provided interesting background, but could not be used to determine audience size.

ATTITUDINAL RESEARCH

Following her study of religious belief in the USSR (AR 1-83), Kathy Mihalisko analyzed attitudes to the religious programs of Western radio among a sample of 870 respondents.²⁹ About one-third of the group considered themselves "sympathetic" to religion. They felt that the amount of religious programming carried by Western radio was sufficient, and saw no need to increase it. Those who listened to religious programs were not all believers. Some simply wanted to learn more about religion. Programmers were advised to use language that would be understood both by non-religious people, and those seeking to learn more about the topic. Clearly programs about religion would be useful to listeners: it wasn't enough just to broadcast religious services.

29 Kathy Mihalisko, "Audience to Religious Broadcasts in the USSR," AR 3-86, October 1986, HIA.

Topics covered in abbreviated form in Research Memoranda included views of the USSR's current problems, and changes in attitude to the war in Afghanistan. The latter showed increasing disapproval of the Soviet war effort.

MEDIA BEHAVIOR

During the period October 1984–September 1985 RL had on average 8–12 million listeners on an average day, 18–26 million in an average week, and 18–28 million in an average month.³⁰ In other words, most of RL's listeners tuned in on a regular basis of at least once a week.

1987

USSR events

Gorbachev shifts emphasis to political reform.

- January: Soviet jamming lifted on BBC.
- January: *Moscow News* article criticizing Stalin.
- January: CPSU plenum: Gorbachev says economic reform requires political change.
- March: Akhmatova's poem "Requiem" published for the first time in USSR.
- May: Matthias Rust lands plane in Red Square.
- May: Soviet jamming lifted on VOA.
- August: Nationalist demonstrations in three Baltic capitals.
- October: First Western-style TV program for young people aired: *Vzglyad*.
- November: Gorbachev calls for filling in of blanks of history.
- November: Yeltsin fired from Politburo.
- December: Washington: Gorbachev and Reagan sign Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty.

In 1987, as glasnost and perestroika began to take off, SAAOR began to feel the effect of the Soviet reforms on our work. The new more relaxed atmosphere filtered down into the field and facilitated our interviewing. In Paris, a move to a larger office gave us room to expand. New staff members allowed us to increase our output. New reporting formats made the output more relevant. New technologies cut into the turn-around time between receiving data and analyzing it.

³⁰ R. Eugene Parta, "Trend Report: RL's Audience in the USSR. Oct 84-Sep 85," AR 2-86, April 1986, HIA.

The introduction of focus groups provided us with an entirely new research tool to gain audience feedback.

SAAOR MOVES TO NEW OFFICES

Our staff was continuing to increase, and the owner of our office on Boulevard St. Germain had decided to sell the apartment. It was time to move out. Nicole Kostomarov, our office manager, found larger premises on Rue Eugène Flachat in the 17th arrondissement. The location was a lot more staid than St. Germain, and seemed to harbor a great many elderly ladies living in private mansions, but the offices themselves were better adapted to our expanding operation.

As before, we had one floor of a residential building to ourselves. We occupied two separate apartments, opening off opposite sides of the landing. The space was already adapted to professional use, and each door was equipped with an entry code. The larger office was divided into separate rooms that ultimately housed nine members of our permanent staff. In the smaller premises on the other side of the landing, the Bolshvax computer occupied a large air-conditioned space, with an ominous nuclear symbol on the door as a joke. Richard Brooks, our computer systems analyst, tended to its well-being with the help of multiple computer screens and an odd-shaped ergonomic chair. A large open room housed interns and part-time staff, and there was a small kitchen with a fridge and microwave.

All went well until the residents downstairs came up to complain about “vibrations” emanating from the computer. Spotting the symbol that Richard had put up as a joke, they informed the building management that the new tenants were running a nuclear operation. It took Nicole a lot of explaining to convince them that we just had a strange sense of humor. Once we found a way to reduce the vibrations the neighbors calmed down—and the nuclear symbol stayed.

Despite its advantages, the Flachat office was a lot more vulnerable than our eyrie on the top floor of St. Germain. Security was not all it might be, as we were soon to find out. We moved in at the beginning of March 1987, and in December we had a break-in. Burglars climbed up on the flat roof of an adjoining building, broke a window, and clambered in. Year-end festivities were in full swing, and a lot of the building’s residents were away.

I was away too, skiing in Switzerland. Lynne and I had an apartment in Verbier, and we were spending the Christmas holidays with our sons Rolf and Max, both home from college in the US. I was out on the balcony, after a day on the slopes, watching the last reflections of the day on the snow-covered mountains,

when the phone rang. Just another seasonal call from friends or family? Not quite. The voice on the other end identified himself as Monsieur Pagès, our contact at the French Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST). “Your office has been broken into,” he announced.

The break-in had been discovered that morning by Ségolène Mykolenko, a new hire who had joined us three months earlier. Not many members of staff were around in this holiday period. Ségolène opened the door, tried to deactivate the alarm, and realized it was off already. Then she saw the file cabinets had been broken into, there was a lot of mess, and files and other things were scattered around. The intruders had attempted to break into the file cabinet containing the petty cash box, assuming that the prominently placed combination lock denoted valuable content, but they had failed to open it.

Alarmed, Ségolène contacted Slavko, and he came over at once. Then Richard arrived to do some routine maintenance work on the computer. Slavko feared an intrusion by the KGB. Someone called the DST. Monsieur Pagès, arrived wearing (of course) a trenchcoat, and Richard showed him round. His first reaction was to say, “I don’t like it. They didn’t find what they wanted, and they’ll be back.” However, when the local police arrived, they pointed out that the window the burglars had climbed through was insecure. In fact, nothing had been taken. Back then we didn’t have laptops, and our cumbersome desktop computers didn’t appeal. Nor did our files. Monsieur Pagès concluded that it had been a simple burglary, not a political act. Richard surmised it was the work of a junkie looking for cash. There was no need for me to cut short my holiday and return to Paris (I was grateful). When I informed Munich what had happened, Gene Pell offered his sympathies, and sent me a previously issued memo ordaining that the Director and Deputy Director³¹ of a department should not be absent at the same time. From then on, we paid attention.

STAFFING CHANGES

1987 saw three new hires, and one departure. We were sad to lose Kathy Miha-lisko, who transferred to Munich at the end of the year to work as a Research Analyst in Radio Liberty’s Research Department. Her Ukrainian husband, who had previously worked for Radio Vatican, had got a job with RL’s Ukrainian service, and was already installed in a Radio apartment on Mühlbauerstrasse. Kathy

31 Our Deputy Director at that time was Charlie Allen, who was also on vacation.

initially worked on Ukrainian affairs, and began writing about Belarus a year or so later. Belarus was one of the first of the national republics to push for de-Stalinization, which quickly turned into de-Sovietization all over the USSR.

In August, we were joined by Charlotte Pullen, a British graduate of the University of St. Andrews. Charlotte held an MA degree in Russian, and had studied at the Pushkin Institute in Moscow. On the recommendation of one of her professors, she interviewed for a translation job in Munich, but then heard that the position had been filled. Her disappointment was shortlived: "A couple of weeks later, I got a phone call from Nicole asking me to come to Paris."³² Originally, her task was to translate listener comments on VOA and BBC, and she later took on the role of assistant editor too. Charlotte stayed with SAAOR for two years, before leaving for Washington to join her American fiancé, whom she had met in Paris. She proved a valuable conduit to St. Andrews' students and staff, several of whom worked for us in one capacity or another over the next few years.

October saw the arrival of Constantin Galskoy, who had briefly presided over RL's Russian Service, and had come to SAAOR to handle background data on the social situation in the USSR. Kostya had been born in Casablanca to Russian émigré parents. The family left Morocco for the US, where he obtained a Ph.D. in Russian studies from Stanford. It was Gene Pell who had suggested that he join our staff and I agreed. Kostya had been hired by the previous management, but Pell and RL Director Nick Vaslef were planning to take the Russian Service in a different direction. Kostya brought a deep understanding of Soviet reality to the analysis of SAAOR's background information—a product that was becoming more and more sought after by Soviet affairs specialists. Our monthly Soviet Background Notes was a compendium of glimpses of Soviet life covering hospitals, schools, lifeguards, national resentment—anything and everything—obtained from Soviet emigrants who described their own experiences. He shared an office with Slavko, and the discussions in their Russo-Ukrainian enclave were frequently lively. Sadly, Kostya passed away in January 2020.

Our third hire of the year was Ségolène Mykolenko, a French citizen who spoke fluent English, after spending a year in a Minnesota high school, and was married to a Frenchman of Ukrainian extraction. She joined us in October to help Nicole cope with the greatly expanded influx of questionnaire data, and the routine tasks of office management. Ségolène held a degree in Russian from INALCO, the Institut National des Langues et Civilisation Orientales. She had

32 E-mail Charlotte Don Vito to Patricia Leroy, 26 July 2020.

come to us via Slavko, who knew her from the local Ukrainian community. After working for two years at a pharmaceutical laboratory, she was delighted to have the chance to use her Russian again. She was cheerful and competent, and a welcome addition to the staff. Originally hired as a bilingual secretary, her duties rapidly evolved, and when we introduced an optical mark reader to process the questionnaires a few months later, she took charge of the complex process of turning raw data into computer-readable form.

OPTICAL MARK READING (OMR)

Up until now, we had been processing each completed questionnaire manually, using a system called Easy Entry. This required bringing up a blank questionnaire form on the screen and entering the information from each completed questionnaire, item by item. The average rate of data entry was about 30 questionnaires per person per day. The task was laborious, time-consuming, and monotonous, and we were constantly obliged to search for short-term helpers to alleviate the burden. We were now processing about 5,000 traveler interviews and 1,000 emigrant interviews per year, plus regular data on the food project, and episodic data on opinion research. Our methods were no longer viable. We had to look elsewhere.

Some time previously, Joan Shields of the Computer Center in Munich had recommended IBM's Mark Sense technology, and this suggestion had been seconded by John Klensin of MIT.³³ At the time we weren't ready for it, but now we decided it was the way to go. Richard began looking for technology which would allow us to enter the data using an optical mark reader, and eventually decided the Kaiser OMR system would best serve our purposes.

Switching to the new technology caused a lot of upheaval. Aside from staff training, the questionnaire had to be revised. While Richard explored the technological issues, the rest of us considered how best to streamline the questionnaire. The current questionnaire was basically a recording form. It had been redeveloped several times over the past fifteen years, and had become very long and unwieldy. During the summer, we designed a much simpler questionnaire that presented the questions in the logical order they might take in an interview.

It was hoped to activate the OMR questionnaire on European interview sites on January 1, 1988. We planned to brief the interviewers and run field tests in the

33 Memo from Parta to Short (Munich Computer Center), "Optical Mark Reader for SAAOR," 29 September 1987, HIA.

fall. We also incorporated suggestions from outside sources. In Vienna, Helmut Aigner, who was already familiar with OMR technology, made a number of recommendations.³⁴ In London, Charlie discussed the new questionnaire with Dr. William Belson, director of the Survey Research Centre, where he was attending a validity training seminar.³⁵ Belson was experienced in coping with the challenges of unconventional research projects such as ours, and he made several valuable suggestions that clarified the wording and organization of the questionnaire.

The field test was conducted in November 1987 by a limited number of interviewers in each location, and was extremely successful. It was clear that it would pose no problems for widespread use. All the European interviewers understood the new concept and welcomed the more compact format. The five interviewers in Greece felt it would improve the quality of the data (though they had to be reassured that the new short format would not affect rates of pay). In Finland, they saw it as making interviewing easier and reporting more accurate. In Paris, Anne-Danièle agreed that it would make her work easier: coming from someone rather set in her ways, that was quite a relief.

Back in the office, a new computer, a Micro-Vax II, was installed in the “nuclear” zone under Richard’s supervision. The MVII (aka the Menshevax) handled word-processing, office automation, and other in-house programs. The slower VAX 730 (the Bolshevik) dealt with network connections, batch-processing jobs, and all data entry work. The Kaiser OMR was connected to the 730. Ségolène handled data entry, making sure that each questionnaire was machine readable, and feeding the sheets into the machine.

THE NURSERY

During our time on Rue Flachat, the open-space office next to the computer room was populated by a steady trail of interns, short-term hires, and part-time workers. Most of them were young students or recent graduates who stayed a few months, then moved on. Richard, the only senior staffer in that part of the building, referred indulgently to the room as “The Nursery.” Usually our temporary helpers were Anglophones: American, Canadian, or English. Some of them spoke Russian, but not all, for data entry did not require linguistic knowledge.

³⁴ A few pages of our OMR questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4.

³⁵ Charles Allen. Memo for the Record, “TDY in London of October 7-9, 1987,” 12 October 1987, HIA.

They included Dan Abele (later at the Canadian Embassy in Washington D.C.), Charles Williams (who had been a member of the Whiffenpoofs at Yale, and sang evenings in a jazz bar near Les Halles), Rima Puniska (a poet and artist), and Allison Stanger (later a professor at Middlebury College).

One of our few French interns was Laure Mandeville, who had perfected her English at a boarding school in the north of England. Laure had studied Slavic Languages and Civilizations at INALCO (Langues Orientales); International Relations and Soviet Studies at the prestigious École des Sciences Politiques; and she had been a visiting fellow at the Russian Research Center at Harvard. With her solid theoretical background in Soviet history, politics, and literature, Laure was fascinated to discover Soviet reality on the ground by helping to process SAAOR's media and opinion research. After working for SAAOR, Laure spent time at RFE/RL in Munich, before joining the French daily paper *Le Figaro*, where she has been a respected journalist for the past thirty years.

MEASURING THE "CORE AUDIENCE"

The change in data-processing methods led us to change the way we analyzed Soviet media behavior. Up until now, we had examined only yearly listening trends for the entire Soviet adult population. We continued to do this, but, thanks to larger databases and to the accelerated data entry procedures, we were now able to go one better. We began to provide estimates, four times a year, for a smaller, more motivated segment of the population that we labelled the Core Audience to the major Western broadcasters.

The term "Core Audience" was used to designate the urban educated part of the interviewing sample. This represented about a quarter of the adult population. It was the most stable part of the database. Fluctuations tended to appear among segments of the population where our data were weaker, e.g. elderly women or young people with minimal education in rural areas. This was not the case with the Core Audience. Since these were the people most likely to listen to foreign radio, they were of most interest to broadcasters. Measuring the Core Audience gave us a sensitive and timely tool to monitor audience shifts. It served as an early warning system to let us know if any changes were underway.

The quarterly Core Audience reports were produced by Dr. Ree Dawson, who was our statistical consultant at MIT. Ree had a PhD in statistics from Harvard, and played an important role in SAAOR's statistical development. Improving our statistical methodologies was a constant concern, and Ree was one of the top

people in the field. She was a small woman with elfin features who spoke very calmly, in complete sentences, and owned an excellent collection of vintage port. She had been working with John Klensin on issues related to the simulation procedure since 1981, and she began to collaborate directly with our office in the mid-1980s. Looking for possible ways to refine our simulation methodology, Ree carried out an extensive analysis of SAAOR data, and in the summer of 1986 she wrote a 28-page paper entitled “Developing a Methodology for Projecting the Audience to Foreign Broadcasts in the Soviet Union,” which was an in-depth analysis of SAAOR data for the periods 1974-1980 and 1981-1985. This study led to the development of the Core Audience concept described above.³⁶

In June 1987, we issued an analysis of the Core Audience for the major Western stations covering the period 1974-1986. VOA consistently attracted the largest audiences over the twelve-year timespan. RL was lower than BBC throughout most of the period, but moved ahead in the later years. Deutsche Welle ranked fourth throughout the period.³⁷

GLASNOST FACILITATES INTERVIEWING IN THE FIELD

By 1987, glasnost was a given on the Soviet political scene. Gorbachev's early attempts at economic modernization had run into difficulties, partly because the Soviet population, after seventy years of repression and collective thinking, was unwilling to take the kind of personal initiatives that might have jump-started the economy. At the CPSU plenum in January, he admitted that, “the problems that have built up in society are more deeply rooted than we first thought.” Starting with the liberation of Sakharov at the end of 1986, he shifted the reform agenda from economics to politics, in the hope of reassuring the population that the change in direction was real. In the course of 1987, political prisoners were released, banned artists were allowed to exhibit, articles critical of Stalin appeared in the press, an anti-Stalinist Georgian film called *Repentance* was widely screened in cinemas, Balts and Crimean Tatars held nationalist demonstrations, and a new Western-inspired, youth-oriented program called *Vzglyad* appeared on Central Television.

³⁶ See Chart 2 in Appendix 1 for findings on core audiences for the period 1980-1990.

³⁷ R. Eugene Parta, “Trend Analysis 1986: Listening to RFE/RL and Other Foreign Stations Among Core Audiences in the USSR,” AR 2-87, June 1987, HIA.

The impact of the new climate on field work was plainly apparent. When I went to Finland in August, the interviewers told me that the “spirit of glasnost” had facilitated interviewing, and respondents were considerably more forthcoming than before. Soviet travelers were no longer so afraid of each other, and this made it easier for Westerners to approach them and engage them in conversation on a wide range of topics. In Helsinki, I noticed that Cyrillic signs in shops were much more common than before.

In Denmark, where the problems with CHVS had subsided,³⁸ interviewing conditions had also become much easier. In September, Charlie reported that Soviets were willing, even anxious, to talk with foreigners. Several people told him that the groups were less carefully supervised, and the tourists were less suspicious of each other. One interviewer claimed that “tourists are given more hard currency to spend, which makes them feel less poor and more anxious to shop and sightsee.”

In Vienna, tourist traffic had increased, and tourists were easier to get hold of. They were now allowed to visit the city at night, which gave the interviewers more room to maneuver. The quality of work improved considerably when Charlie and Aigner decided to kick off the interviews with the opinion questions and move into media from there.³⁹

Soviet traffic to Eastern Europe was also on the increase, The Israeli institute IMA remarked that: “It is clear that one of the ramifications of Gorbachev’s glasnost policy is an increase in the flow of [ordinary] Soviet tourists to the East Bloc.”⁴⁰ The interviewers agreed that Soviet tourists’ more relaxed behavior made it easier to make contact, and that the interviewees spoke much more frankly than before.

GLASNOST IN SOVIET EYES

The impact of glasnost on Soviet tourists was perhaps more apparent to outsiders than to the tourists themselves. Soviet tourists traveling abroad did not seem to realize how much glasnost had affected their attitudes and behavior. Queried on their attitudes to glasnost over a period of several months in 1987, their responses

38 Memo Martyniuk to Parta via Allen, “Mission to Copenhagen, 13 to 17 June 1987,” 18 June 1987, HIA.

39 Charles Allen, Memo for the Record, “TDY of September 28-30, 1987 (Vienna),” 6 October 1987, HIA.

40 Letter from IMA to Parta, 21 August 1987, HIA.

conveyed a fair amount of reticence toward their government's new policies. They had been hoping for a rise in living standards which had not taken place. Responses were garnered from 1,267 travelers, and Sallie Wise carried out a study of the unweighted data.⁴¹

Although a majority of the group felt that glasnost was a positive phenomenon, about one-third said it left them either indifferent or ambivalent—responses which suggest a certain amount of skepticism. Thirty-eight percent viewed glasnost as an opening-up of Soviet society: a sort of domestic *détente*. A slightly smaller group (33%) saw it as a component of Gorbachev's reform program; a means of streamlining the Party and government bureaucracies: not so much a goal in itself but as a means for implementing reform in other areas. About a fifth of the sample took the cynical view that glasnost was a cosmetic gesture, with no real substance.

Asked what concrete effects of glasnost they had noticed, 41% of the group evoked a kind of "intellectual thaw," but fully one-third of respondents either thought there had been no effects, or were unsure what effects there had been. Almost half the group (45%) said they had not been impacted personally by glasnost. Responses from those who thought they had been affected by glasnost were somewhat vague: 23% felt that there was "more freedom," and another 23% said they had become "more civic-minded." Did they think that eventual limits should be placed on glasnost? One-third of the group said no, but about one-quarter felt that eventual limits were inevitable.

Respondents who listened to foreign radio were asked if glasnost had affected the way they listened to Western stations. Greater openness in Soviet media might have been expected to diminish interest in outside sources, but this was far from the case. A large majority of the foreign radio listeners (77%) said they continued to listen at the same rate as before. They were more skeptical of glasnost, and less inclined to accept it at face value. "Glasnost hasn't affected my attitude toward foreign radio," said a scientist in his 20s, a CP member. "On the contrary, foreign radio has influenced my attitude toward glasnost, insofar as it shows where glasnost is lacking."

In a thought-provoking aside, Ivan Myhul, our man in Singapore, observed that there was far more interest in glasnost among the visiting scientists he interviewed than among lesser-educated respondents.

41 Sallie Wise, with Charlotte Pullen, "Soviet Citizens on Glasnost: High Expectations, Limited impact," AR 5-87, December 1987, HIA.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Our long-time interview sites were functioning well, and we continued to explore alternative sites with a view to broadening the respondent sample. Some of these ventures were brilliantly successful, and others somewhat less. In our more far-flung sites, cultural differences often caused operations to founder.

Eastern Europe. Thanks to IMA, we were reaching subsets of the Soviet population which would otherwise be out of our reach. There were now 11 trained interviewers who each made two trips a year to Eastern Europe, and they were succeeding splendidly in their task of targeting respondents from the non-Russian republics. The share of minorities such as Central Asians in our database was increasing slowly but surely.⁴²

Spain. SAAOR made a brief foray into Spain when JJ, one of the Copenhagen interviewers, recruited a potential interviewer based there. JJ believed that his recruit, AP, had the makings of a top-notch interviewer, and the initial batch of 25 interviews was good for a beginner.⁴³ Unfortunately, most of the respondents belonged to ship's crews, and we didn't want to overload the sample with this demographic. Another problem was that we did not have an institute in Spain, and Copenhagen was too far away to control the situation. Although AP was promising, we did not pursue the relationship.

Germany. Our contact institute in Germany remained GfM (now GfM-GETAS), which was based in Hamburg. Hamburg had proved disappointing as an interview site, but West Berlin got regular traffic from Soviet cultural organizations and occasional tour groups. When Charlie located two new interviewers in West Berlin, he entrusted them to GfM-GETAS. We received trial interviews which were incomplete but showed promise. The ratio of listeners to non-listeners corresponded to that of other locations, and two-thirds of the respondents were non-Russians. Three of the interviews had lasted for more than two hours, a sign that the interviewers had developed good rapport with the respondents.⁴⁴

Japan. We were failing to make much headway in Japan. Masagaki said he had attempted several contacts, but that his prospects always seemed to be accompanied by people from the Soviet embassy.⁴⁵ There was no tourism from the USSR during the winter months, but the ship schedule he sent me in the spring

42 Charles Allen, Memo for the Record, "TDY of February 20-27, 1987 (Israel)," 3 March 1987, HIA.

43 Letter Martyniuk to Sauerberg, 1 October 1987, HIA.

44 Letter from Allen to Wille, GfM-GETAS, 15 July 1987, HIA.

45 Letter from Masagaki to Parta, 16 March 1987, HIA.

suggested that traffic was about to resume. Unfortunately, we were bedeviled by the lack of competent interviewers. The Brazilian lady had left for South America, while the Japanese interviewers found it difficult to overcome their natural reticence. By October, the second pilot phase was still not completed.⁴⁶ The main problem was that Masagaki was overcommitted to his business and human rights activities and couldn't give the project the time it required.

Singapore. Progress was also slower than expected in Singapore. A total of 67 interviews had been conducted in the latter part of 1986, most of them by Ivan Myhul, who was having trouble recruiting additional interviewers.⁴⁷ Charlie went to take a look at the operation in April. There was a lot of Soviet traffic, and he was impressed by Myhul's talents and access. But Myhul was getting frustrated with his recruiting difficulties, not to mention his rocky relations with Irwin Hankins. He was getting drawn into operations in India, which interested him more.

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

In India, things were moving much faster. The Bombay-based institute MRAS had completed a successful pilot, using interviewers trained in part by Ivan Myhul, and the questionnaires submitted were satisfactory. Listening behavior mirrored that in other interviewing fields, and the sample included a sizeable proportion of non-Russians. Project Jewel, as we had named it, could move into the next phase.⁴⁸

In April 1987, Charlie flew to Bombay. He was greeted by Irwin Hankins, taken to meet MRAS, and introduced to Mr. Ghosh, the project supervisor. Interviewing was underway in Bombay and Delhi, and Charlie found both locations highly promising. There was a lot of Soviet tourist traffic in Bombay, and he thought it would be worth hiring more interviewers there, but the crossroads for Soviet tourism was definitely Delhi. "The possibilities of Delhi are enormous," Charlie reported. "Not only do Soviets abound—in hotels, marketplaces, museums, but they display a relaxed attitude which stems from their country's relations with India, and their relative affluence. They obviously enjoy being richer than the locals... I spotted large groups of non-Russians, particularly Central

46 Letter from Parta to Hall, 20 October 1987, HIA.

47 Handwritten Letter from Myhul to Parta and Hankins, 3 January 1987, HIA.

48 Letter from Allen to Hankins, 6 February 1987, HIA.

Asians.”⁴⁹ Outside of these two major cities, we had one interviewer in Hyderabad. Calcutta, Madras, and Goa were said to have Soviet traffic, but we needed to have one site functioning perfectly before spreading our wings.

The five interviewers Charlie met in Delhi were all students of Russian with adequate language skills. He felt that experience would smooth off the rough edges, and this proved to be the case. Returning in November, he found that their work had improved, and so had their Russian. They were providing more substantive comments, and they were a lot more streetwise.⁵⁰

During the summer, they had been introduced to the questions on opinion research by the Indian supervisor, Mr. Ghosh in Bombay. These questions had been omitted in the preliminary stages, to avoid making the project look too political. India's relations with the USSR were sensitive, and any hint of East-West politics was best avoided.

A DAY IN THE FIELD

All the interviewers were subject to field verification of their interview procedures, and Kathy Mihalisko spent a day in the field with Anne-Danièle in Paris. ADM was interviewing a Soviet woman named Vera, and she introduced Kathy as a Canadian friend who spoke no Russian. Kathy described ADM's interviewing style as “non-provocative, you might even call it gentle. She keeps the conversation going almost continually, asking questions but also telling stories about herself, France, whatever. I'm sure that Soviets must feel at ease with that.”⁵¹

The meeting took place in a café near the Luxembourg Gardens. ADM had already established that Vera was a BBC listener. The parts of the conversation that Kathy observed concerned opinion questions on glasnost and Afghanistan. Vera linked glasnost to the rise in price of bread and other foodstuffs, but did not delve into its broader implications. The topic of Afghanistan clearly made her uncomfortable. She said she was concerned by drug problems among men who had served there.

After meeting in the café ADM took Vera to an appliance store, where she bought Vera a Dustbuster hand-held vacuum cleaner, and the conversation then continued over lunch. SAAOR did not encourage making gifts to inter-

49 Charles Allen, Memo for the Record, “TDY of April 21-May 3, 1987 (India),” 6 May 1987, HIA.

50 Charles Allen, Memo for the Record, “TDY of November 13-22, 1987,” 23 November 1987, HIA.

51 Memo Mihalisko to Allen, “Field Verification of ADM,” 26 August 1987, HIA.

viewees (nor did we reimburse them), but Anne-Danièle had her own ways of working. The length of the interview was atypical, but it allowed Kathy to observe ADM's empathetic approach and her considerable interviewing skills: "I understand why ADM does not like to spend hours upon hours with individual tourists, preferring instead to conduct interviews with members of tour groups. She has an open and generous nature which could cause her bank account to empty out in no time!"

FOCUS GROUPS IN THE AGE OF PERESTROIKA

In 1987, SAAOR began to organize focus groups on Radio Liberty programming. This involved bringing together a group of Soviet emigrants to discuss a theme or program under the guidance of a moderator. Participants were asked to listen to tapes of RL programming, and then attend a group discussion. Moderators were provided with a guide to enable them to steer the debate, and ensure the discussion was productive. Usually the discussion rooms were equipped with a two-way mirror which allowed the SAAOR coordinator to observe the proceedings. After the group session, the moderator was required to provide a report on the findings of the discussion. Focus groups were to become a key part of SAAOR's work in the following years, and they provided broadcasters with immediate concrete feedback.

Our focus group coordinator was Susan Roehm. Before moving to Paris, Susan had worked at an advertising agency in New York. Without her direct experience of organizing focus groups, the project might not have got off the ground. Previously Susan had been responsible for organizing Listener Panel Reviews, and for her this was a logical progression.

The first moderator we worked with was David Satter, an American journalist who had many years of experience in the Soviet field, including six years in the USSR as correspondent for the London *Financial Times*. Satter spoke fluent Russian, which was obviously a necessity for this kind of work, and proved himself a talented moderator. His first focus group for SAAOR centered on RL's new flagship news program *In the Country and the World*. The participants, all Jewish emigrants, were hesitant at first, since they barely knew what a focus group was and were unsure of the nature of the proceedings, but they warmed up quickly and ended up enjoying themselves. They were surprisingly forthcoming, and the results of the discussion were very fruitful. They gave the program a positive evaluation, and asserted unanimously that glasnost

would increase the importance of Western radio as a complementary source of information to Soviet media.⁵²

Later in the year, a second focus group brought together another five emigrants to discuss the question: “What is Radio Liberty’s role during this period of glasnost and perestroika?” The participants were requested to review an entire day’s Russian-service programming before the group session.⁵³ The focus group took place in Paris in October. Again the moderator was David Satter. In his report, Satter noted:

the five panelists ... agreed that, because of the confusing nature of perestroika, Soviet citizens need to receive rigorous analysis and full information from foreign radio stations... The consensus was that Radio Liberty should take an analytical approach, but avoid tendentiousness and propagandizing. Concerning coverage of perestroika, most of the panelists agreed that it was important to analyze events from a strictly Western point of view, making no concessions to the Soviet frame of reference... Some of [the panelists] said that RL was by far the best of the foreign radio stations and more worthwhile than the others despite the jamming. All panelists agreed, however, that RL had to take pains to avoid appearing aggressive if it was to be effective.

UPHEAVAL IN ROME

Although the Rome emigrant interviewing project was less sensitive than the project with Soviet citizens, it was reliant on the good will of the Jewish humanitarian organizations which dealt with the arriving emigrants, and which could not afford to antagonize the Soviet authorities. In March, we got a call from our Rome coordinator Elena Nicotera with the news that the American Joint Distribution Committee (JOINT), one of the main American humanitarian organizations, had told Irina, our main interviewer, to “stop bothering the emigrants”—in other words, stop interviewing them.⁵⁴ Our whole operation looked like it would grind to a halt.

52 Susan Roehm, “Current Events Broadcasting to the USSR: Review of *In the Country and the World*: A Focus Group Analysis,” SPR 2-87, June 1987.

53 Susan Roehm, “Radio Liberty and Perestroika: A Focus Group Analysis: RL Russian Program of 25/26 August 1987,” SPR 4-87, November 1987, HIA.

54 Slavko Martyniuk, Memo for the Record, “Elena’s telephone call re situation in Rome,” 9 March 1987, HIA.

Interviewing was put on hold while we worked out a solution. Irina had been doing good work, but it looked as though we might have to replace her. Charlie went to Rome to see Ms. Heller, the Rome Director of HIAS,⁵⁵ which worked closely with JOINT. Heller's main concern was to protect the neutral status of HIAS, and avoid jeopardizing Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union. Heller appeared prepared to condone SAAOR's interviewing, provided we kept a low profile,⁵⁶ but advised us to talk to the "appropriate people." At a second meeting with Slavko in June, she said the same thing: JOINT did not approve of our interviewing project and we needed to obtain the benediction of its Vice-President in New York, a Mr. Goldman.⁵⁷ I asked BIB member Ben Wattenberg to approach JOINT in New York on our behalf. Slavko attempted to intervene with a Rome rabbi who worked with HIAS. After that, we could only wait.

It wasn't until the end of the year that we heard that JOINT had withdrawn their objections to our project. By then it was almost too late. Nicotera, who worked for HIAS, had resigned during the kerfuffle to protect her job, and the interviewers had melted away. Not until April 1988 were we able to put together a new team.

NEW YORK RENAISSANCE

Activity in New York had been slack for years, but in March 1987 I received a proposal from one of the interviewers, Igor Panich, who wanted to take over Field Research and breathe new life into it.⁵⁸ IP was the son of an RL journalist, and an actor by profession. He had studied in London, but was now living in New York, and finding it difficult to make ends meet. He noted that the improved political climate between the US and the USSR had generated a good deal of Soviet traffic in New York, especially, but not exclusively, in the cultural field: "Thanks to a more relaxed, or rather less paranoid, Soviet attitude toward contact between Soviet citizens and members of the Russian émigré community, interviews are much easier to conduct today..." He had found five potential interviewers in New York. One of them, a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music, had already done some satisfactory interviews.

55 Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

56 Charles Allen, Memo for the Record, "TDY of May 18-22, 1987 (Rome)," 24 May 1987, HIA.

57 Memo from Martyniuk to Parta via Allen, "Mission Report – Rome 20 to 24 June 1987," HIA.

58 Letter from Panich to Parta, undated but from March 1987, HIA.

IP said he was willing to give the project his full attention, train people in the field, and periodically conduct spot checks to ensure proper quality. We gave him the go-ahead to do a pilot study of 40 interviews.⁵⁹ By August we had received the pilot study with a cover letter noting that, while there were the predictable shortcomings of a trial period with new interviewers, all in all he thought it was quite a good effort.⁶⁰

RADIO MARTÍ

Radio Martí had been created in 1983, and began broadcasting uncensored news and programming to Cuba in 1985. The man behind it was a Miami-based businessman and political activist, Jorge Mas Canosa, the founder of the Cuban-American National Foundation. The station was loosely attached to the Voice of America.

Radio Martí faced the same problem of lack of access to its audience as RL, and Mas Canosa visited our office to learn how we set about studying our audience. “You’re doing God’s work!” he told us. In August–September 1987, two members of his audience research staff spent two weeks in the office to examine our methods, after which Charlie took them to Vienna to experience interviewing in the field. Over the course of two days, they attended three individual meetings with interviewers, observed three interviews with Soviet travelers, and received a thorough explanation of recruiting and training techniques. Dinner with Helmut Aigner and his wife gave them the chance to ask follow-up questions in the evenings.

They had gained a good understanding of how field work was managed. Whether they managed to put our methods into practice was another question. Their resources were limited, and there were relatively few Cuban travelers outside the island. It sounded like most of Radio Martí’s audience research was done with visitors to Cuban families in south Florida.

OPINION RESEARCH MOVES AHEAD

An update on the war in Afghanistan by Sallie Wise showed that the attitudes of the Soviet adult urban population were polarized, with about a third opposing the war, a third supporting it, and a third either ambivalent or without an opinion. Disapproval had increased since 1984. Western radio listeners were more likely to

⁵⁹ Letter from Allen to Panich, 1 April 1987, HIA.

⁶⁰ Letter from Panich to Allen, 11 August 1987, HIA.

show disapproval, as was the non-Russian population.⁶¹ It is worth noting that opposition to the war was arguably a side-effect of the “new political thinking” propounded by Gorbachev. SAAOR’s reporting on Afghanistan was unique: the data we were collecting was unavailable from any other source, and this seminal analysis raised our profile in areas where we had hitherto been unknown.

Research Memoranda were issued on views of glasnost (RM 2-87), evaluation of economic problems (RM 4-87), and East-West relations (RM 5-87). Respondents had some difficulty in defining the concept of glasnost but agreed that Soviet media had become livelier and more candid. At the same time, they expressed doubts as to how far glasnost could go. Concern was expressed about the economic problems facing the USSR: in general respondents supported Gorbachev’s leadership, but were skeptical that he would succeed in carrying out his reform agenda. East-West relations were thought to have improved in the previous couple of years, but respondents were still very concerned about the threat posed by a continuing arms race.

MEDIA BEHAVIOR

A report on patterns of listening to RL’s Russian Service showed that prime time was in the later evening hours, with the most loyal audience tuning in after midnight (when reception was often reported to be better). The average listener tuned in almost 9 times a month.⁶²

Comparative perceptions of the major Western broadcasters showed that BBC ranked highest for credibility while RL ranked highest for relevance. All stations ranked high for professionalism. BBC ranked highest for a “friendly tone,” while RL ranked lowest.⁶³ (I made a point of bringing this to the attention of management.)

A report on national minority audiences to RFE/RL showed that, while dual-language listening (i.e. Russian and national language) was prevalent, there was a shift toward more listening in Russian.⁶⁴ As an All-Union service, the Russian

61 Sallie Wise, “The Soviet Public and the War in Afghanistan: A Trend Toward Polarization,” AR 1-87, March 1987, HIA.

62 SAAOR Staff, “Patterns of Listening to the Russian Service of RL: 1986 Data,” AR 3-87, October 1987, HIA.

63 Mark Rhodes, with Patricia Leroy, “Comparative Audience Perceptions of Major Western Broadcasters to the USSR: January 1985-June 1987,” AR 4-87, November 1987, HIA.

64 Kathleen Mihalisko, “The Nationality Audience of RFE/RL: Implications of Multi-language listening,” AR 6-87, December 1987, HIA.

service was on the air twenty-four hours a day and provided much more extensive coverage of glasnost and perestroika. This might have accounted for the shift. The non-Russian language services had much less air time and tended to focus on cultural and political events in their respective republics.

Topics covered in Research Memoranda included coverage of Soviet television innovations (RM 1-87), availability of audio-video equipment (RM 7-87), demographic ratings (RM 8-87), and similarities of SAAOR data with joint Soviet-French opinion polls (RM 9-87), and a Lithuanian poll (RM 11-87).

1988

USSR events

Moscow Spring. Gorbachev continues to break with Stalinist tradition. Conservative resistance to reform increases. Ethnic tensions appear.

- February: Stepanakert: Demonstrators demand transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan to Armenia.
- February: Sumgait (Azerbaijan): Anti-Armenian pogrom.
- March: Hardliner Nina Andreyeva publishes letter in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* criticizing reforms.
- April: Geneva Accords on Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.
- May: Moscow: Reagan-Gorbachev summit.
- May: Soviet troops begin withdrawal from Afghanistan.
- May: Law on cooperatives passed.
- June: Nineteenth Party Conference. Gorbachev proposes extensive reforms including contested elections.
- September: Creation of Lithuanian reform movement Sajudis.
- October: First congress of Latvian People's Front.
- November: Estonian Sovereignty Declaration.
- December: Gorbachev announces unilateral military cuts in address to UN.
- December: Earthquake in Armenia. International aid accepted for first time.

In 1988, glasnost continued to propel SAAOR'S work in new directions. The first stirrings of national unrest were appearing in the Soviet Union, and in our panel reviews and focus groups we tried to determine what Russian and non-Russian listeners expected from Radio Liberty. We pioneered a study of listening to Western radio among Afghan refugees in Pakistan. But the major event of the year was the lifting of Soviet jamming in November. Radio Liberty had been jammed

for 35 years, and the unprecedented accessibility of our broadcasts would require a change of approach for both programmers and audience researchers.

GLASNOST AFFECTS THE SOVIET MEDIA LANDSCAPE

After three years of glasnost and perestroika, it was time to examine the impact of Gorbachev's reforms on the Soviet media landscape. We used both data analysis and focus groups to review the question. In March we issued a study of the impact of glasnost on the Soviet media environment and the implications for Western radio.⁶⁵ One thing was certain: since Gorbachev had come to power, the media landscape in the Soviet Union had changed beyond recognition. In 1978, we had gathered data on the media behavior of the Soviet adult urban population, which clearly defined the position of Western radio in the Soviet media mix.⁶⁶ Ten years later, that landscape was no longer the same. By 1988 Soviet citizens were relying much more on their own press and television to get information on current events. Western radio listening had also increased. Fewer people relied on agitprop meetings for information. Word of mouth (which had previously served to amplify the reach of Western information) was also less prominent.⁶⁷

In a focus group held in Jerusalem and moderated by the journalist David Satter, we delved into the question of how Soviet citizens gathered and evaluated information from various sources (SPR 6-88). Panelists said that they came to an understanding of current events in much the same way that they would put together a jigsaw puzzle, using the Soviet press, Soviet television, and Western radio. An example they gave was their reactions to coverage of the military parade celebrating the victory at Khost (Afghanistan) on Soviet television's *Vremya*, which they said was done in a typically Soviet artificial style. Coverage of the same event on RL's program *In the Country and the World* pointed out that articles had already been published in the Soviet press on partisan advances made in the Khost area, and that the "victory" parade was trumped up and deceptive. By evoking Soviet press coverage of the event and analyzing it in the context of the

65 SAAOR Staff, "Glasnost and the Soviet Media Environment: Implications for Western Radio," AR 1-88, March 1988, HIA.

66 R. Eugene Parta and Mark Rhodes, "Information Sources and the Soviet Citizen: Domestic Media and Western Radio," AR 5-81, June 1981, HIA. Although Western radio was not included in the Soviet studies, the pattern of media consumption was otherwise basically the same in SAAOR data as in the Soviet studies.

67 These shifts were covered in detail in *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 45-46.

overall situation in Afghanistan, RL provided the additional pieces necessary to complete the picture and show what had actually happened.

We also took a look at how Soviet citizens viewed their government's new domestic policies. From a study by Sallie Wise towards the end of the year, it appeared that the Soviet public was largely supportive of Gorbachev's reforms, but their enthusiasm was tempered by a strong degree of skepticism.⁶⁸ Again, this was caused by the lack of economic improvement which had still failed to materialize. The political aspects of glasnost played well with the intelligentsia, but did not have the same impact among the Soviet rank-and-file.

The technical side-effects of glasnost on the media were examined in a Research Memorandum studying the likely effects of modernization of the Soviet wired radio system, the spread of videocassette recorders, and the ability to receive satellite television (RM 1-88).

LISTENER ASSESSMENTS OF RL PROGRAMMING

Focus groups were a finely honed tool for understanding the likely reactions of our audience. Unlike a panel review, where participants listened separately to broadcast tapes and then filled out a questionnaire, a focus group brought the participants together to discuss what they had heard. Focus groups cut to the heart of the matter and pinpointed the essential issues.

Two of the groups we held during the year concentrated on young people. The under-thirties represented a new generation of listeners, and it was important to know what appealed to them and what did not. David Satter moderated a group in Jerusalem examining the attitudes and media habits of Soviet youth (SPR 7-88). Participants agreed that

most Soviet young people are obsessively materialist and devote a great deal of their free time to the acquisition of 'things' that represent for them the 'beautiful life' as they imagine it to be in the West... the pursuit of information is relatively less important... Most young people are highly skeptical of possibilities for change within the system, and those that do hold out hope for perestroika have primarily material advantages in mind...

⁶⁸ Sallie Wise, "Soviet Citizens on Gorbachev's Domestic Policies: Continuing Support but Growing Skepticism," AR 5-88, October 1988, HIA.

Their media consumption patterns tended to be haphazard and they rarely tuned in news programs. The panelists did feel, though, that Radio Liberty could play an important role in helping young people evaluate the current changes taking place in their country:

Careful, insightful analyses of domestic and foreign events could provide Soviet young people with the necessary perspective on their lives to explain the confusion they see around them... But care would have to be taken in their presentation... The programs should be lively, up-to-date, not too long, complicated or turgid, and read by youthful voices that speak contemporary 'young' Russian."

They noted that if Radio Liberty is indeed interested in drawing a youth audience, it would have to change its approach. Serious programming on political themes should be interspersed with lighter news and features of general interest. In short it would be a challenge for Radio Liberty to reach a youth audience with its current broadcasting approach.

The second youth group was oriented specifically toward RL programming. It was moderated in Rome by the French academic Wladimir Berelowitch, editor of *L'Autre Europe*, a magazine covering the Warsaw Pact countries. Berelowitch belonged to the Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), the prestigious French research organization. The young participants had listened to tapes of two RL Russian Service programs, *Russia Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* and *Our Planet*. They found the first relevant and informative, but the second poorly conceived and superficial (SPR 12-88). The general findings were consistent with the earlier youth focus group: "Soviet young people's media behavior is capricious and selective." Young people were thought to be attracted to information that concerned them directly and information of a non-political nature.

RL's coverage of human rights and the Afghan war was examined in a group moderated in Boston by David Satter (SPR 18-88). The group found reporting on Afghanistan satisfactory. They urged RL to provide as much factual material on the war as possible, and to accompany it with measured analysis.⁶⁹ Respondents

69 Analytical research showed that the Soviet public was increasingly unhappy with the war. See Sallie Wise, "The Soviet Public and the War in Afghanistan: Discontent Reaches Critical Levels, Jan-Oct 87 Data," AR 4-88, May 1988, HIA.

were less positive about RL's human rights reporting. Since many issues went unreported in Soviet media, they relied on RL to bring them up to speed.

Economic programming and perestroika were the subjects of a group moderated by Wladimir Berelowitch in Rome (SPR 14-88). Participants stressed the need for detailed coverage of economic issues, since this was the Soviet Union's most pressing problem. SAAOR had been urging broadcasters to provide more programming on economics for some time.

GLASNOST FACILITATES IN-COUNTRY POLLING

Another consequence of glasnost was that more public opinion studies were being published in Soviet media. Some had been commissioned by Western institutions and carried out by the Institute of Sociology of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Publication of the findings allowed SAAOR to compare the results of internal and external studies. A study commissioned by CBS and the *New York Times*, querying Muscovites on how perestroika had affected their lives, yielded findings gratifyingly close to those of a similar question we had posed in our traveler surveys (see Chart 10 in Appendix 1).⁷⁰

Around the same time, Alek Ginsburg of the Munich samizdat unit⁷¹ informed us that unofficial groups in Leningrad were carrying out polls of the population, and considering introducing questions on Western radio. Ginsburg contacted us to see if we were prepared to share our questionnaire. He was an ex-dissident who had joined RL's samizdat unit when he left the USSR. He told Charlie that our office was well known to his friends in the USSR, and that he himself had known about us for two decades.⁷² Ginsburg believed that SAAOR should have a hand in the interviewing project, though he acknowledged the need to avoid giving the appearance that we were sponsoring it. *Chas Pik* (Rush Hour), a Leningrad newspaper, later published an article on the unofficial polls that included some information on Western radio. Whether those responsible for the poll were Ginsburg's friends, we never found out.

70 Board for International Broadcasting, 1989 Annual Report on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Washington, DC., 1989, pp.49-50, HIA. See Chart 10 in Appendix 1.

71 RL's samizdat unit put out a weekly publication called *Materialy samizdata* and was responsible for a comprehensive samizdat archive that had been created in 1968.

72 Charles Allen. Memo for the Record, "Proposals by Alek Ginsburg," 20 January 1988, HIA.

IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH EAST EUROPEAN AUDIENCE RESEARCH

Relations with our Audience Research counterparts at RFE had not been easy under Henry Hart, but in 1987 Hart retired. Gene Pell offered his job to my Deputy Director, Charlie Allen, but Charlie turned it down. Eastern Europe was outside his field of experience, and he preferred to remain in the Soviet area. Pell seemed to think I had discouraged Charlie from taking the job—which wasn't the case—but I felt I ought to look around for an alternative candidate.

For years we had been working closely with the International Broadcasting and Audience Research department of the BBC and its director Graham Mytton. Graham's deputy was a mathematician and statistician called Peter Herrmann. I had come to know Peter reasonably well, and I thought he would make a good director for EEAOR. I felt that we could work closely together, which had not been the case with Hart. Peter was offered the job and took over EEAOR in January 1988.

Our new relationship with EEAOR got off to a good start with an unprecedented Joint Research Conference in Munich in February 1988.⁷³ Peter and I produced a "Statement of Intent" providing for closer cooperation between the two units, notably in the area of computer capability. Although SAAOR and EEAOR would each retain their specific regional focus, we would aim to create a joint database housed on RFE/RL's mainframe computer in Munich, and adopt common data processing and computing methods.

POWER GAMES WITH THE COMPUTER CENTER

The idea of a joint database originally came from the Munich Computer Center, and on first sight it made a lot of sense. EEAOR was less computerized than SAAOR, and it looked like a good way to get them up to speed. As a first step, EEAOR agreed to switch to the optical mark reading system for data entry which was already in use at SAAOR, and it was hoped that the Computer Center would help us develop a sophisticated computing capability allowing the two units to interact.

73 Memo from Parta and Herrmann to RFE/RL Management, "SAAOR/EEAOR Joint Research Conference," 15 March 1988, HIA.

But that wasn't how it played out. SAAOR had for years been using the MIT Consistent System to provide audience estimates. It was a crucial tool, and we could not do without it. Unfortunately, the Computer Center was exploring a different system called the Statistical Analysis Package (SAS). In May a delegation from the Radios traveled to SAS headquarters in Heidelberg for a briefing. The group of computer specialists included Richard Brooks, our systems analyst. I went along as well, to get an overview of what SAS could provide. At that stage, we had no objection to using SAS for certain functions, but relinquishing the Consistent System was out of the question. We would need to use the two systems in conjunction. This would require converting the Consistent System to run on the VAX systems used within RFE/RL. Munich tried to find a solution to fit our needs (or so they claimed), while our consultants at MIT, John Klensin and Ree Dawson, studied the possible impact of a CS-SAS package on our future work.⁷⁴

With hindsight, it appears that the Computer Center was merely stalling for time. In the end, they announced that they were going to go with SAS. They claimed that they were simply putting the CS conversion "on the back burner" until they could determine how much of the data modelling could actually be done in SAS,⁷⁵ but it's doubtful that this was the case.

Their announcement put the cat among the pigeons. Klensin was justifiably annoyed. He had worked out a deal with MIT that offered highly favorable terms to RFE/RL, and he was personally embarrassed by the position this refusal had put him in. What was more, he foresaw difficulties in trying to convert the Consistent System at a later date. Meanwhile, Richard Brooks was concerned that he would be sidelined if the Computer Center succeeded in bringing our systems under direct control from Munich.⁷⁶ There was an intense exchange of e-mails between Paris and Munich and Cambridge. The Computer Center promised to iron everything out. It failed to do so.

The upshot was that nothing changed. The plans to convert SAAOR and EEAOR to SAS never came to fruition. SAAOR continued to use the Consistent System for audience estimates, and the optical mark reader set up in-house by Richard for data entry. EEAOR continued to rely on its old technology. If the debacle taught us one thing, it was not to count on the Computer Center to develop new systems for us.

⁷⁴ E-mail from Klensin to Parta, 7 November 1988, HIA.

⁷⁵ Memo from Parta to Herrmann and Jefferson, "Status of meeting of 2 November 1988," 5 November 1988, HIA.

⁷⁶ Memo from Brooks to Parta, "PJ's Fax," 8 November 1988, HIA.

NEW HIRES

In May 1988, Amy Corning joined us as a Research Analyst. She held a BA magna cum laude in Russian and Soviet Studies from Harvard-Radcliffe College, and an MA in Regional Studies-Soviet Union from Harvard. Amy had lived in Moscow for several years as a child (her father worked for the American airline Pan-Am). She had worked for a while in the Harvard Library and had been recommended to us by Prof. John Garrard of the University of Arizona, whom she had helped with research for his book on the Soviet Writers' Union.

Another new hire was Fiona MacLachlan, who came to SAAOR to translate audience feedback from Radio Liberty, VOA, and BBC from Russian and French into English. Thanks to the introduction of the optical mark reader, we no longer needed short-term hires to deal with data entry, but we still had translation needs over and above what our regular staff could handle. Fiona was from Inverness and held a BA in Russian from the University of St. Andrews, where she had known our assistant editor, Charlotte Pullen.

A CALL FROM MITTERRAND

Our systems analyst Richard Brooks experienced what he describes as “a real ego booster” when he was briefly “borrowed” by a prominent French journalist to help him set up a database online. Michel Tatu of the French daily *Le Monde* had created a large database of Soviet political figures that he wanted to make available online. Tatu had spent seven years as a correspondent in Moscow, and written a number of books about the Soviet Union. He had also participated at the joint RL-NYU conference in 1965 which I had helped organize in my first year with RL. Richard was working with Tatu at the offices of *Le Monde*, when someone came in to say that President Mitterrand was on the line. “I’ll call him back,” responded Tatu. “I’m busy with something important.”⁷⁷

EXPLORING NATIONALITY ISSUES

Responding to the nascent unrest among Soviet national minorities, our focus groups explored broadcasts in Georgian and Ukrainian, and we also investigated the Russian service’s coverage of national minority issues. Panel reviews of RL’s

77 E-mail from Richard Brooks to Patricia Leroy, 6 September 2020.

nationality language services were expanded to cover the Tajik, Azeri, Uzbek, and Armenian services.

The Georgian focus group (held in Jerusalem) felt that RL failed to cater adequately to the highly nationalistic Georgian audience. Only two of the four days' programming contained enough material on Georgia for their taste (SPR 8-88). The Ukrainian group (held in Toronto) mostly liked what they had heard, though the tone of the broadcasts was sometimes perceived as condescending. They stressed that it was important to distinguish between the government and the people: Ukrainian listeners needed to feel that RL was on their side (SPR 19-88).

We examined Russian service broadcasts on national minority issues from a Russian and a non-Russian perspective. The Russian participants in a focus group held in Boston felt that the programming they had heard on national minority issues contained less factual material than Soviet media, and they urged RL to make improvements (SPR 17-88). The non-Russian participants in a panel review in Israel were far less critical. They found nothing to object to in either content or tone, and welcomed programs that the Russian reviewers had found objectionable (SPR 20-88).

RADIO FREE AFGHANISTAN

Radio Free Afghanistan (RFA) first went on the air on October 1, 1985, six years after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Its purpose was to provide uncensored information to the Afghan peoples, and to serve as a free surrogate radio for the Afghan resistance.⁷⁸ Like Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, the station was funded by the US Congress, and its oversight organization was the Board for International Broadcasting.

Originally RFA broadcast only a half-hour daily program in Dari. It added another half-hour in Pashto in 1987.⁷⁹ The program included regular news bulletins, feature broadcasts, and analyses focusing on Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Islamic world, but the lion's share of its airtime was devoted to the war and the political consequences of the Soviet invasion. RFA maintained a proper journalistic tone and approach, and favored a free, unified, independent, Muslim Afghanistan.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ BIB Annual Report 1988, 26, HIA.

⁷⁹ Although several regional languages are spoken in Afghanistan, Pashto and Dari are the two official languages.

⁸⁰ BIB Annual Report 1988, HIA.

By 1988, RFA had been on the air long enough to have established a measurable audience. SAAOR commissioned an audience survey to be carried out in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan. BBC and Deutsche Welle participated in the project. VOA had sponsored a previous study of foreign radio listening, but declined to participate in this one for budgetary reasons. Nevertheless, we included VOA in the questionnaire in order to get a clear overall picture of foreign radio listening in Afghanistan.

The major contractor for the study was World Research International (WRI), based in London, which had carried out the VOA study in 1984. Their Pakistani sub-contractor was Domestic Research Bureau-Lever Brothers (DRB), based in Karachi. The survey was originally scheduled to go into the field in July 1988. We obtained Pakistani government approval, but the department in charge of camp administration was slow to give us the go ahead, saying that the situation was unstable and possibly unsafe.⁸¹ Eventually we got the green light, but then the monsoon intervened, and the project did not go into the field until October.

“RADIO MUJAHIDDIN”

I flew out to Pakistan to observe the interviewing. In Karachi, I was greeted by Mr. Bagai, the head of DRB, Allen Marshall, the American head of Lever Brothers in Pakistan, and Mrs. Saleem, the director of field work for DRB, who was to accompany me throughout my ten-day stay. Mrs. Saleem was a lady in her fifties, friendly and very professional. She and I traveled together to Peshawar, where the interviewers were to be briefed on October 12. She dealt with the interviewers in a no-nonsense manner that showed clearly who was in charge. Mrs. Saleem ran all the field trips in the Peshawar area, and accompanied the female interviewers into the camps. On the evening we arrived, she took me out for an excellent dinner of roast lamb in the Old Town. After a day of traveling, followed by a lengthy training session, I was starving, and she made sure I got seconds. Aside from that one evening, I never saw her when we weren't working. She didn't stay in the same hotel as I did.

Fourteen interviewer candidates were present for the initial briefing.⁸² They had had three days of training on the questionnaire. After the session, they were

81 Fax from Parta to Marsh, “Afghan Survey,” 21 July 1988, HIA.

82 Memo from Parta to Marsh, “Radio Listening Survey Among Afghan Refugees,” 26 October 1988, HIA.

cut back to eight, six men and two women. Men were not allowed to interview female respondents. All the interviewers had higher education, some of them in the social sciences, and they were all very competent.

We had targeted 12 camps in the Northwest Frontier Province for 50 interviews each. The first interviews I observed took place near Peshawar in the camps of Jalozaï and Badebar. I was surprised to see that they resembled permanent adobe-type villages. I had been anticipating tent camps. Clearly the refugees had been there for some time, and had settled in.

The original project design had called for interviews with 400 males and 200 females, but regrettably this had to be modified to 450 males and 150 females. It turned out that men were more likely to have opinions on radio broadcasts than women, and we needed to provide substantive quotes for the stations involved in the project.

Respondents were selected on a “random-route” basis. The interviewers would fan out from a central point in the camp and pinpoint every fourth or fifth dwelling. They would then select one family member within the dwelling on the basis of a Kish grid.⁸³ The pattern was carefully followed in the interviews that I observed. Interviewers were generally accompanied by a member of camp security.

The interviews themselves were usually conducted either inside the dwelling or in its courtyard. I observed only one refusal to be interviewed. Once they had heard what the project involved, people were eager to participate. If the respondent listened to several stations, which was often the case, interviews could last up to an hour. I couldn’t understand what was being said, but it was clear from their behavior that the respondents thought that radio listening was an important topic. Often other male family members would gather around and chime in during the interview. The interviewers would have to ask them to be quiet so that the interview could continue.

I couldn’t of course observe interviews with women, but an interesting incident was reported by Mrs. Saleem and Beryl Gale of WRI, who were observing some of the field work. Asked how she had first heard of Radio Free Afghanistan, a female respondent said a letter describing the existence of RFA had been sent to the camp a couple of months earlier. The local mujahiddin committee had asked

83 The Kish grid is a method for selecting members within a household to be interviewed. It uses a pre-assigned table of random numbers to find the person to be interviewed. It was developed by statistician Leslie Kish in 1949, and is a technique widely used in survey research.

people to listen to RFA. Her husband, who was listening to the interview, confirmed this. Unfortunately no one knew who had sent the letter.⁸⁴

BBC was the most widely heard station: indeed its name seemed to be used almost generically for foreign radio. It was always the first station to be spontaneously mentioned. VOA was usually referred to as “America,” and Deutsche Welle as “Alemana.” The name Radio Azadi (Radio Free Afghanistan) was not always volunteered, and often had to be prompted. Some respondents confused it with Radio Kabul. Their confusion might have stemmed from the fact that Radio Azadi was not associated with a specific country. (The word “Azadi” means freedom.)

Anticipating this confusion, I had taken the precaution of recording call signals and signature tunes for BBC, RFA, VOA, and Deutsche Welle on a pocket-sized tape recorder that I carried around with me. I reckoned that the names of the stations might not always be clearly understood, and that the call signal stood a better chance of recognition. The stratagem worked well. RFA’s call signal was widely recognized: it was frequently greeted with approving nods, and readily identified as “mujahiddin radio.” Several respondents reported that RFA was jammed by the Russians, but when I tuned in on my portable Sony at the hotel in Peshawar I could hear RFA clearly in both Pashto and Dari.

THE KHYBER PASS

I was staying at the Pearl Hotel, a comfortable modern hotel located a short way from the city center. It had an excellent restaurant and swimming pool, and the bar reserved for foreigners was usually crowded. One evening, I ran into Dee Smith, a correspondent covering the Afghan war for RFE/RL who would later work for the *Wall Street Journal*. She was dressed like a “liberated” Afghan woman, wearing Punjabi-style trousers with a hijab tossed way back. When not observing interviews, I wandered round the old city of Peshawar, visited the outdoor market, and listened to the muezzin calling from the minarets. Looking back, it occurs to me that this was unwise. A lone Westerner was an easy target, though I never felt in danger.

Everywhere I went in Pakistan, I was required to check in with the local authorities. Everyone was curious about what I was up to, and they all wanted a description of the project. They were invariably friendly, and tea was always offered. The governor of Peshawar (I’m not certain of his exact title) gave me tea

84 Memo from Parta to Marsh, 4, HIA.

in his garden, and asked about our project, until a friend of his arrived and he rather astonishingly started to tell us both about how his brother had recently been shot dead at the family estate in “Pindi” (Rawalpindi) by estate workers who were threatening a strike.

Mrs. Saleem got permission for me to visit the Khyber Pass, which linked Pakistan to Afghanistan. It had been a staging post on the Silk Road, and in the nineteenth century had been the site of several skirmishes in the Anglo-Afghan wars. It was situated in a federally-administered tribal area which was normally off-limits. Mrs. Saleem must have had good connections because it only took a couple of days to organize the visit. I was driven up to the Pass in an open Jeep first thing in the morning. In the back seat was a Pashtun guard in military dress holding what looked like a WWI Enfield rifle. At that point, it occurred to me that it might not be a good idea to go somewhere I needed an armed guard—but it was too late to back out.

The Khyber Pass was about a 90-minute drive from Peshawar. I chatted to the driver, a pleasant fellow. The guard sat behind us, rifle bolt upright, never uttering a word. Our destination was Landi Kotal, the town at the top of the pass, which was about a kilometer from the Afghan frontier. When I checked in with the local governor, he gave me a personal tour. Landi Kotal was a spooky little town which was mainly remarkable for the number of stores selling smuggled consumer electronics. One of them had a washing machine on display. I couldn’t imagine who the customers were. This was a restricted area, and there were very few people on the streets. I only spent about an hour in the town—there was nothing else to see. On the trip back, we passed several stone plaques on the sides of the pass commemorating this or that British military unit that had met its fate there. I was relieved to get back to town.

A SHORT WALK IN THE HINDU KUSH

One of our interview sites was the town of Chitral, high in the Hindu Kush mountains. We went up there by air. When the aircraft came in to land, it had to spiral down like a corkscrew between high mountains on all sides. It was a little nerve-racking. If the weather turned bad, it seemed we could be stuck for days. The one road back down the mountains to civilization was apparently so hair-raising that Mrs. Saleem wouldn’t even consider it.

Chitral felt like the back of beyond. Kipling set *The Man Who Would Be King* not far away. The RFA signal came in free and clear. The streets were lined with

stalls selling pretty much anything and everything. I bought myself a flat-topped Afghan hat which I kept for several years—until I saw pictures of the Taliban and realized I was walking round in their signature headdress. We stayed overnight in a dingy hotel and dined off chicken curry that consisted of more bones than chicken. Mrs. Saleem berated the waiter over the absence of meat. He shrugged and slunk away. Next morning I got up early to catch the sunrise on the snow-capped peaks of the Hindu Kush. It was one of the most amazing sights I've ever seen! As a regular visitor to Switzerland, I was used to mountains, but this was even more spectacular than the Alps. After breakfast, we paid the obligatory visit to the local governor and drank the obligatory cup of tea, and then went to observe the interviewing team in the refugee camp. The interviews went off without a hitch. The weather stayed cool and crisp, with stunningly blue skies, and we were able to leave as planned. The views over the mountains as we took off were superb.

GUN CITY

Our last interviewing site was a camp several hours' drive south-west of Peshawar. The route went through a town well-known for gun manufacturing. Security was reputed to be shaky, and Mrs. Saleem was nervous. We traveled in a white van with UN markings on the sides. The drive down in the daylight would be safe enough, but she was worried about returning after dark.

The camp stood on a flat, sandy plain. Unlike the camps near Peshawar, refugees were housed in huge tents with UN markings on the sides. We were taken into one of the tents to meet the camp leaders. They were all sitting cross-legged on large carpets. Our local guides introduced us and explained the nature of the project. They were plainly unimpressed. I decided to break the ice by playing the call signals of the stations to see if they recognized them. I started with BBC and everyone nodded. I worked through the others one by one. They began to see it as a kind of a game. When I came to RFA's signature tune, the leader, an elderly man with a stern face, broke out into a smile and said "Radio Mujahiddin." We had connected! The next part of the ritual was to drink tea with them. The glasses stood top down on a metal tray in a shallow layer of unsanitary-looking water. "Uh oh," I thought, "here comes trouble!"

The trip back after dark through "Gun City" was uneventful, though we could see armed men walking around. Mrs. Saleem breathed a sigh of relief when we were safely on the road back to Peshawar. That night, as I had expected, I paid the price for the dirty glasses.

RFA'S AUDIENCE

Next day I flew back to Karachi, and returned to Paris on an Air France flight that left at four in the morning. The data we had collected were processed first in Karachi and then in London. The results were gratifying. BBC had the highest proportion of regular listeners (at least once a week), followed by VOA, but Radio Free Afghanistan had a respectable audience with 63% of men listening regularly and 34% of women. Deutsche Welle came fourth, and Radio Moscow was well behind with only 17% and 6% respectively.⁸⁵

We were able to report that Radio Free Afghanistan had successfully established itself as one of the main sources of information among Afghan refugees in the border regions of Pakistan. Extrapolating from this, one could assume that it was probably well received within Afghanistan itself. The men in the camps went regularly back and forth across the border to engage in hostilities. One of the men in the last camp we visited had returned from Afghanistan the previous day. Looking back, it seems likely that the people we interviewed were later to be linked to the Taliban or one of the other militant groups that laid waste to Afghanistan after the Soviets withdrew in 1989.

Radio Free Afghanistan was closed down in 1993. The ostensible reason was lack of funds, but the real reason was the assumption that the US no longer had a role to play in Afghanistan. This was a grave mistake. RFA could have been an invaluable counterweight during the years of Taliban rule. When the US invaded Afghanistan and ousted the Taliban after 9/11, the station was relaunched. Beginning in 2002 it played an important role on the Afghan media scene by disseminating news, facts, and ideas, and promoting democratic values and institutions.

After the Taliban takeover of the Afghan government in August 2021, Radio Azadi had to adapt to the new unfriendly circumstances. The Azadi staff and main office moved from Kabul to a “bureau in exile” in Central Asia. It continued to collaborate effectively with their in-country sources and stringers.⁸⁶ They broadcast, live call-in shows, interviews with Taliban representatives, and gathered video from inside the country. Azadi continued to transmit over the in-country FM network that they had used for years, re-started short-wave broadcasts and was active with streaming on social media. The FM network was

85 Memo from Parta to Marsh, “Listening to Radio Free Afghanistan,” 19 February 1989, HIA.

86 Martins Zvaners email of May 4, 2022 to R. Eugene Parta.

vulnerable to be shut down by the Taliban but as of May 2022 was still carrying Radio Azadi broadcasts.

INTERVIEWING IN EUROPE: CARROTS AND STICKS

Elsewhere our regular survey research was going well. In January 1988, as we had planned, new questionnaires designed for the optical mark reader were introduced in all interview sites for both citizens and emigrants. The process was generally trouble-free and interviewers adapted easily.

After the upheavals of the previous year, the emigrant interviewing project was running smoothly. In Rome, the situation had settled down, after a one-year hiatus. I had contacted Yuri Shtern, an emigrant who had organized panel reviews for us on Afghanistan and religion, and he agreed to take over the project. Slavko Martyniuk made several trips to Rome during this period to ensure a smooth transition. Yuri replaced Elena Nicotera as coordinator, and brought new interviewers on board. In Israel, a larger team had been recruited, and they proved adept at eliciting snippets of background information for our monthly Soviet Background Notes.⁸⁷

The traveler project was proceeding satisfactorily on our major European sites, though attempts to expand interviewing into India and Japan were advancing more slowly than we had hoped, and Singapore had had to be abandoned. By now we were doing about 5,000 citizen interviews per year. We continued to pay frequent visits to the cities concerned, to show institutes and interviewers alike that we cared about them and relied on them, and sometimes they reciprocated in kind.

In September 1988, our Greek project director, Christopher Geleklidis, made a visit to Paris. For him it was the trip of a lifetime. He and his wife Nina came to the office, and he dazzled us by whipping out a 1 kg tin of beluga caviar—rather like a magician pulling a rabbit out of a hat. He had bought the caviar off a Soviet tourist and brought it to Paris to share with us. We were duly awed, especially after the lid rose up on its own when the tin was opened! (Not an act of divine levitation: just the pressurized contents being exposed to the air.) We got out our teaspoons and dug in. Nicole's ever-present pooch, Kroshka, was offered a taste, and seemed to like it.

87 Charles Allen, Memo for the Record, "TDY of January 8-14, 1988," 19 January 1988, HIA.



Christopher Geleklidis, our man in Piraeus, Greece, with a tin of caviar that he brought us in Paris.

The conversation somehow moved on to General Vlasov's execution by the Soviets. Christopher gave us a graphic description of the event. Someone politely inquired where he got his information. Christopher gave the skeptic a wolf's glare. "I have my sources!" he snapped. Geleklidis was still talking about his Paris trip when Slavko went to Greece a month later.⁸⁸

In Copenhagen, to show appreciation of the interviewers' efforts and bolster morale, we organized a conference to review their work, and Charlie, Slavko, and I all attended.⁸⁹ The interviewers had been given specific demographic targets: women, the under-thirties, the lesser-educated—the weak links in our database, and they had been instructed to prioritize non-Russian respondents.⁹⁰ It was complicated work and it deserved special thanks. After the conference, institute director Steen Sauerberg organized a lavish drinks and dinner affair in a private

88 Memo from Martyniuk to Parta via Allen, "TDY Report Greece 24 (sic) to 17 November 1988," 21 November 1988, HIA.

89 Memo from Martyniuk to Parta via Allen, "TDY Copenhagen 24 to 27 September 1988," 5 October 1988, HIA.

90 Letter from Allen to Sauerberg, 17 November 1988, HIA.

room at a good Copenhagen restaurant. About eight of the interviewers were there, along with Steen and his new American wife. An informal cocktail hour was followed by a sit-down dinner.

Everyone got into the spirit of this special event. One of the interviewers, a writer in his Soviet incarnation, came in black tie. He had recently broken up with his girl-friend, and wanted to cheer himself up. He cut quite a dash. With his beard, distinguished demeanor, and mannered speech, he could have been attending a banquet in St Petersburg in 1900. Later he returned to a post-communist Moscow where he became a successful writer.⁹¹ In contrast, CHVS showed up in Gatsby-like shoes with bleached hair, apparently trying to camouflage his rough Soviet-sailor origins with a Long Island mansion look. Charlie made a speech thanking everyone for all that he had learned from them, saying that they had taught him more than they realized, and that it was an honor to work with them.

In Paris, the situation was different. Some of ADM's interviews had to be eliminated from the database because they showed inconsistencies with other interview sites. Anne-Danièle had been working with us since 1964, but we decided to carry out a check. She was put on notice,⁹² and Slavko carried out a field verification near Notre Dame one afternoon in July. ADM was in a café with a man and a woman, and Slavko sat at a nearby table where he could hear the conversation. ADM was slightly unnerved by his presence, but kept the interview going smoothly, and from then on her work improved and she remained in the project.⁹³

SETBACKS IN ASIA

Interviewing in India was developing more slowly than we had hoped.⁹⁴ We were receiving questionnaires regularly, but they didn't pass the chi-square test,⁹⁵ and could not be entered into the database. We were reluctant to abandon the project, because there was a lot of Soviet tourist traffic to India. Irwin Hankins, the project supervisor, who was based in Singapore, made a trip to India to check out the

91 A vignette (unnamed) is included in Appendix 2.

92 Letter from Allen to Merlero, Sondage Service, 26 May 1988, HIA.

93 Slavko Martyniuk, Memo for the Record, "Field Check, ADM - 7.7.88," 8 July 1988, HIA.

94 Letter from Allen to Hankins, 28 April 1988, HIA.

95 Applied to subsets of the data from different geographic areas, the chi-square test served to determine the statistical consistency of data gathered from each area.

situation and reported back to us. He was still positive about the Institute, MRAS, but was concerned about the quality of the interviewers who “don’t have exposure to the culture of the subjects in question, and in fact have very little exposure to anything outside of their own country.”⁹⁶ The problem here, as it was throughout our Asian interviewing fields, is that, unlike in Europe, we were dependent on local people, not people who had a native understanding of Russian and the culture of the USSR.

Interviewing in Singapore had ground to a halt. Our main interviewer, Ivan Myhul, had gone back to Quebec.

In Japan, most of our interviewers had fallen out. Only one interviewer was still active in September 1988.⁹⁷ Although successful in contacting Soviet travelers, he had difficulty getting through the questions and generating comments. Opinion questions were not being asked. The questionnaires were not good enough to include in the database. The yen was rising against the dollar, which made Japanese interviewing very expensive.⁹⁸

Turkey had been in our sights for several years, but we had never managed to get a project off the ground. In June, Charlie went to Istanbul with one of the most capable of the Greek interviewers to give it another try. KAA was fluent in Uzbek as well as Russian.⁹⁹ He traveled to Turkey on a Soviet cruise ship from Piraeus to Istanbul, and talked freely to passengers on their way to Odessa. In Istanbul, his knowledge of Uzbek enabled him to communicate with the locals, and he felt comfortable there. However, the project came to naught. For one thing, Soviet tourists were less numerous and more tightly controlled in the port and market areas of Istanbul than we had hoped. For another, we had no local institute to run things. Our goal had been to set up interviewing on the model we used in Piraeus and Copenhagen but, in KAA’s opinion, local conditions did not permit it.

SOVIETS ATTEND SLAVIC CONFERENCE IN HAWAII

In November, the annual AAASS Conference was held in Hawaii, and I was invited to appear on a panel on Western broadcasting to the USSR. The trip from Europe was long, and there was an eleven-hour time difference. I flew out there

96 Letter from Hankins to Allen, 12 January 1989, HIA.

97 Letter from Allen to Hall, ASI Market Research, 18 January 1988, HIA.

98 Memo from Allen to Parta, “Japan Interviewing, 1984-88,” 20 September 1988, HIA.

99 Charles Allen, Memo for the Record, “TDY of June 10-14, 1988,” 16 June 1988, HIA.

with Lynne, and we spent a couple of nights with friends in San Francisco to break the journey. We had left Paris on a chilly gray November day and we arrived in Honolulu on a warm tropical morning. Neither of us had been to Hawaii before.

My panel presentation took place on the day we arrived, at the Hilton Hawaiian Village complex on Waikiki Beach in the late afternoon. Panelists were seated on a rostrum with the audience below them. The other panelists were from VOA, BBC, and Radio Canada International. The first thing we did was move our chairs down to the main floor. Then we attempted to give our presentations. This was not a great success because we were all spacey from the time change. In the end we settled for a discussion on the importance of Western radio to the Soviet audience, which I recall as being basically incoherent. Fortunately, the audience was as befuddled as we were, and nobody protested. I resolved that in future I would avoid giving talks on the first day of conferences on the other side of the world.

What struck me most about the conference was the relatively large number of participants from the USSR. Glasnost and perestroika were clearly having an impact. Soviet scholars had never been much in evidence at previous AAASS conferences. Also surprising was their readiness to participate in open debate. In a panel presentation, they explained that Gorbachev's "new thinking" was about to change the USSR and its relations with the West. The USSR would no longer be our enemy, they said, and we, not they, would have to adapt.

PROPAGANDA TOOL BECOMES LIBERALIZING FORCE: ARGUMENTY I FAKTY

They meant what they said. Soviet society really was adapting. This was plainly demonstrated by the unexpected U-turn of the propaganda publication *Argumenty i fakty*.¹⁰⁰ *Arguments and Facts* (AiF) started out as a publication intended for lecturers at the Znanie (Knowledge) society which served as an instrument of mass propaganda. AiF provided background information for the propagandists who lectured at meetings of the Znanie society. It was estimated that the average

¹⁰⁰ The information in this section is derived from notes taken by me and Charlie Allen at a presentation by Yulia Chernyavskaya of Rutgers University at the 2021 annual convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEES), held in New Orleans, November 18-21. Chernyavskaya's paper was entitled "Voices of Glasnost: *Argumenty i Fakty* and Soviet Society for Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge in the Time of Social Change. 1978-1990."

Soviet citizen attended four-five of these meetings a year, which gave the society considerable reach throughout Soviet society.

In the 1980s, the Question and Answer period after the lecture became much tougher for the propagandists. The questions they were faced with were quite often based on information from foreign broadcasts, and were somewhat sharper as a result. Often the lecturers simply did not have the answers. *Argumenty i fakty* began to provide information the lecturers could use to respond to difficult questions on embarrassing subjects such as the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Originally circulation of *Argumenty i fakty* had been restricted to Znanie society lecturers, but in 1988 it was opened to public subscribers, and circulation began to soar, rising from 9 million in 1988 to 33 million in 1989. By then the journal had become a major supporter of perestroika. *Argumenty i fakty* was the most widely read Soviet publication in the later years of perestroika, and was often cited in Western broadcasts. Although the chief editor was fired after AiF published a poll showing the popularity of Academician Sakharov, he was reinstated as a result of popular pressure. The influence of Western broadcasts had helped AiF to be transformed from a propaganda tool into a liberalizing force.

WE CONTROL, THEREFORE WE JAM

1988 was the year that Soviet jamming of Western broadcasters finally ended.

Two years earlier, at the Gorbachev-Reagan summit meeting in Reykjavik, Leonid Zamyatin, a top Soviet official, told US officials that: “The Soviet government is not interested in allowing its citizens to sit by their receivers and make their own decisions as to what should be passed on the airwaves and what should be rejected. Therefore we jam.”¹⁰¹

Jamming is defined as interfering with the clear reception of a broadcast signal by beaming a targeted countersignal. Jamming contravenes the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Helsinki Final Act, and Article 48 of the International Telecommunications Convention, which states:

All stations, whatever their purpose, must be established and operated in such a manner as not to cause harmful interference to the radio services or communications of other members or recognized private operation agencies,

¹⁰¹ BIB Annual Report for 1988, p. 53, HIA.

which carry on radio service and which operate in accordance with the provisions of the regulations.¹⁰²

Jamming was illegal, but that never deterred the Soviets.¹⁰³ Jamming began on RL within minutes of its taking to the airwaves in March 1953. Other Western broadcasters were also jammed on and off over the years, but RL had been continuously jammed from the outset. Despite the interference, listeners tuned in anyway, resorting to ingenious methods to defeat the jamming. Some people went out into the countryside outside the range of the jammers (“dacha listening”). Others adapted their radio receivers to pick up lesser jammed meter bands, such as the 13, 16, and 19 meter bands. Soviet radio sets offered nothing lower than the 25 meter band. They were often privately adapted to include the 13, 16 and 19 meter bands by so-called “radio doctors” who would do it for a small fee. Jamming gave the inaccessible broadcasts an aura of “forbidden fruit,” and made listeners wonder what their government didn’t want them to hear.

Jamming had ended on VOA and BBC in 1987, but it continued on Radio Liberty, Deutsche Welle, and Kol Israel. The jamming installations that had been used on VOA and BBC could now be directed at these three stations. But the practice of jamming foreign radio stations clearly did not sit well with the concept of glasnost, and in the course of 1988 there were hints that jamming on RL might be about to be lifted.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Towards the end of the year, Charles Z. Wick, the head of USIA, went to Moscow for talks with Valentin Falin, the newly nominated Chairman of the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee. Falin had previously headed the Novosti Press Agency. Speaking at a news conference at the end of the talks, he said that, “We have failed to solve the problem of improving relations concerning Radios Liberty and Free Europe. But we will continue our efforts.” He added that, “Here in the Soviet Union we are not closing our eyes to the fact

¹⁰² BIB Annual Report for 1988, p. 52, HIA.

¹⁰³ See the very informative chapter on jamming by George Woodard in *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, eds. (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2010), 52–64.

that Free Europe now speaks on a wider range of subjects and more objectively.”¹⁰⁴ Significantly, his remarks were carried by Radio Moscow. He obviously meant Radio Liberty and not Radio Free Europe which did not broadcast in Russian. This was a common confusion.

In light of these rumblings, I felt it would be useful to consider what the end of jamming might mean for Radio Liberty, and the staff and I put together a memo for Munich management.¹⁰⁵ Our observations were based on the assumption that the audience to foreign broadcasts in the USSR was not infinitely expandable. Given what had happened when jamming was lifted on VOA and BBC, our view was that any new RL listeners would already be part of the audience to foreign radio. We hypothesized that the lifting of jamming would bring about a short-term increase in RL’s overall audience size. The new listeners would be curious, but not necessarily committed. The challenge to RL would be to earn their fidelity in the newly-liberalized Soviet media environment.

It was safe to assume that, if the Soviets were really considering lifting jamming on RL, it was because they believed their media were now capable of repelling a challenge from foreign media. Without the aura of forbidden fruit, RL would be judged more strictly on the quality and relevance of its programming.

We stressed that it was crucial to strike an appropriate broadcast tone. New listeners would be won or lost based on how they were addressed. A negative or hostile tone would be damaging. At the same time, RL could not be seen to be easing up on the regime in return for being unjammed. It was a question of integrity. Soviet listeners expected RL to have a critical take on Soviet power, in analysis but not in tone.

We also noted that, once the broadcasts were free of jamming, it would be easier for RL to offer a range of different opinions on Soviet problems, thereby mirroring the current intellectual ferment in the USSR. Recent focus groups on Russian service programming had called for this.

Several years earlier, our study on the typology of adult urban Soviet citizens had shown that RL’s audience was concentrated among the most critically-minded intellectual segments of the population.¹⁰⁶ It was less widely heard by

104 R. Eugene Parta, memo on a possible jamming halt on Radio Liberty, undated but probably early November 1988, HIA.

105 Memo from Parta to Pell, Marsh, Wimbush, Johnson, Elliot and Herrmann, “Some Thoughts on a Possible RFE/RL Jamming Halt,” 11 November 1988, HIA.

106 R. Eugene Parta, “Civil Liberties and the Soviet Citizen: Attitudinal Types and Western Radio Listening,” AR 6-84, Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research, RFE/RL, Inc., September 1984, HIA.

listeners with moderate views. However these Moderates were heavy consumers of foreign radio, and in all likelihood they had now become supporters of perestroika.

The challenge for RL would be to expand its audience into this moderate segment of the population, while retaining the allegiance of its critically-minded listeners. If jamming was ended on RL, it would bring new opportunities, but the window for audience expansion might be relatively small. Once lost, the initiative might be difficult to regain.

“JAMMING HAS JUST ENDED ON RADIO LIBERTY!”

Jamming of Radio Liberty was finally lifted in late November 1988. Jamming of Deutsche Welle and Kol Israel ended at the same time.

I was in Boston when the news came through, participating in a conference at Boston University on the subject of “Gorbachev and the USSR: A System in Crisis?” The conference was organized by Professors Uri Ra’anan and Igor Lukes, and featured a range of prominent speakers. Lt. Gen. William E. Odom, a recognized expert on the USSR, gave the keynote address. I had been invited to give a paper on “Soviet International Operations: Domestic Fallout?” at a session entitled Manifestations of Crisis Within the USSR. My talk covered public opinion on the Afghan war, which was heading in a decidedly negative direction; domestic repercussions of the war, including the difficulty of reintegrating veterans; negative reactions to the high cost of Soviet foreign aid in the Third World; and the increasing importance of public opinion in the USSR. (At Harvard five years earlier, I had been reluctant to use the term “public opinion,” but this was no longer the case.) On a more positive note, I added that the improvement in East-West relations was being welcomed by the Soviet public.¹⁰⁷

I was speaking at one of the afternoon sessions. About two-thirds of the way through my talk, someone came running in from a side door in front of the stage (the hall had stadium style seating) and yelled, “Jamming has just ended on Radio Liberty!” The timing couldn’t have been better. I responded with a clever quip—well, the audience must have thought so, because they laughed. What did I say? I have no idea. Try as I might, I can’t remember.

¹⁰⁷ My talk was reprinted as a chapter in the book that came out after the conference: Uri Ra’anan and Igor Lukes, eds., *Gorbachev’s USSR: A System in Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 102–116.

1989

USSR events

Gorbachev loses control of perestroika. Eastern Europe falls apart, non-Russian republics demand independence.

- February: Last Soviet troops leave Afghanistan.
- February: 87 deaths in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- March: Elections for Congress of People's Deputies. Seats to Yeltsin and Sakharov.
- April: Tbilisi: Independence demonstration: 21 killed by MVD troops.
- April: Soviet tanks leave Hungary.
- April: Poland: Legalization of Solidarity.
- May: Lithuania declares sovereignty.
- May: First session of Congress of People's Deputies shown on nationwide television.
- June: Uzbekistan: Scores killed in anti-Meskhetian rioting in Fergana Valley.
- July: Miners' strikes in Donbass, Kuzbass, Ukraine.
- July: Latvia declares sovereignty.
- August: Over 2 million participate in "Baltic Wave" demonstrations.
- October: Gorbachev encourages reform in East Germany.
- November: Berlin Wall opens.
- November: Velvet Revolution in Prague.
- November: Georgia declares sovereignty.
- December: Malta Summit of Bush and Gorbachev, end of Cold War declared.
- December: Death of Sakharov.
- December: Bucharest: Execution of Ceaușescu.

In 1989, the map of Europe was changing. The communist countries of Eastern Europe were sliding out from under the Soviet yoke, first Hungary, then Poland, then, most dramatically, East Germany, with the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9. At the same time, the national republics of the USSR were chafing against their Russian overlords. Estonia had taken the lead the previous year, and in 1989 Latvia, Lithuania, and Georgia all declared national sovereignty.

Our work at SAAOR mirrored these evolutions and exploited the new openings offered to us. We broadened our focus groups to include Soviet citizens traveling in Western Europe. We switched to open interviewing with a visible questionnaire. We took our first steps towards in-country interviews in the Baltic States and Moscow. And we attempted to determine the impact of RL's broadcasts in an environment where, for the first time in 35 years, there was no jamming.

RL ATTRACTS NEW LISTENERS IN AFTERMATH OF JAMMING

Jamming of RL was lifted in November 1988. In 1989, the station's audibility improved beyond recognition, with nearly all listeners describing reception of Russian service broadcasts as either "good" or at least "fair." Technical improvements boosted the ratings further in the second half of the year. A few listeners still complained of jamming, but 1989 was a bad year for sunspot activity, and the interference was probably due to natural causes. The non-Russian services also enjoyed much better reception than in previous years.¹⁰⁸

The lifting of jamming brought about a significant audience increase. For the first time in its history, RL took first place among Western broadcasters in terms of weekly reach.¹⁰⁹ From 10% in 1988, it jumped to 17% in 1989. This put it ahead of both VOA and BBC. According to a data subset of 1,614 listeners to RL, the number of new listeners tripled in 1989.¹¹⁰ RL attracted more new listeners than all the other major broadcasters combined. The service that benefited most from this was the Russian service, which broadcast 24 hours a day and served as an All-Union service.

Who were these new listeners? Most of them belonged to the demographic group that already dominated RL's audience: well-educated urban males in the 30–49 year age bracket. We were pleased to see that 21% of the new listeners were under thirty years of age. It looked as though RL's audience was broadening to include more young people, more women, and more people with lower education levels.

Still, we could not afford to rest on our laurels. Right now, new listeners to Western radio were choosing RL over other stations, but it might not be easy to retain their long-term loyalty. The fact was that the new listeners appeared to be generally less motivated than RL's long-term audience. Jamming had previously discouraged them from tuning in, and they clearly preferred the more convenient evening hours. It was entirely possible that many were only listening out of curiosity. Would they continue to do so once their curiosity was satisfied? It seemed

108 Mark Rhodes, "Comparative Audibility of Western Broadcasters 1989," RM 2-90, March 1990, HIA.

109 See R.E. Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 7; and R.E. Parta, "Trend Analysis July-December 1989," AR 1-90, HIA. "Weekly reach" is defined as the proportion of listeners reached in the course of an average week. On an average day up to 25 million people heard a foreign broadcast, and almost two-thirds of them were now listening to Radio Liberty. See Charts 1-3 in Appendix 1.

110 Mark Rhodes and Amy Corning, "Radio Liberty Attracts Many New Listeners in 1989," RM 1-90, March 1990, HIA.

that what they wanted was reporting on the ferment in the USSR, rather than information on the West, and in this area RL obviously had an advantage over other Western stations. The danger was that if Soviet news coverage continued to improve, some of the new listeners might find RL redundant.

Some, but not all. The more critically-minded of the new audience members looked to RL to help them make sense of the new information available. They wanted guidance in evaluating information from Soviet sources, and they sought an outside perspective on breaking events. Since RL was perfectly placed to fulfill this function, it could hope to retain this subset of new listeners for the foreseeable future. RL's research resources and access to Soviet and Western experts allowed it to provide a level of analysis and a spectrum of views that was still beyond the reach of Soviet media. In terms of news coverage, RL's physical distance from the USSR posed practical and psychological obstacles, but in terms of analysis this was an advantage.

NEED FOR LESS CRITICAL TONE

But if we were to retain these new listeners, it was necessary to make some changes. RL could not continue to broadcast the way it had before. A crucial issue was its frequently critical broadcast tone—which was something SAAOR had been calling attention to for some time.¹¹¹ Although improvements had been made, RL was still considered sharper and more critical than other Western broadcasters. When it became clear that some of our new listeners were put off by this, it was time to take action.

The problem was not that RL should refrain from making criticism where it was warranted. What counted here was the *manner* in which it was made. A sharp critique of Soviet reality had been more than acceptable at an earlier time—indeed it was exactly what many listeners sought from RL—but it was no longer a viable approach in the new media environment. What listeners wanted now was more empathy, backed up with carefully reasoned analysis to help make sense of the rapid and confusing shifts in Soviet society.

At the request of Executive Vice-President Bill Marsh, I went to Munich to discuss the tone issue with the broadcasting services. I presented our findings in an open meeting which was well attended, and gave the programmers a frank exposé of the problem. Their reactions were far more positive than I had dared to

¹¹¹ See discussion of tone in *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 37-38.

hope. They were anxious to see RL play a constructive role in the rapidly developing media scene in the USSR, and they were prepared to use SAAOR data to guide them.

STAFF CHANGES

In 1989, after eight years with SAAOR, Charlie Allen decided it was time to pursue a new career path. He left us in August to follow a year-long MBA course at INSEAD, a highly-regarded French business school based in Fontainebleau. With events moving so fast in the USSR, the long-term future of SAAOR was uncertain, whereas the MBA would open up new perspectives, and allow him to move his family back to the United States. With Charlie's departure, I lost a valuable deputy. For a time I hoped he might return to SAAOR after completing his course, but instead he went on to a business career that in its early years was largely focused on the post-Soviet space, allowing him to put his knowledge of Russian and his familiarity with Russian politics and culture to good use.

During his time at INSEAD, Charlie and I remained in close contact, and he continued to share his considerable experience with the field institutes. This was immensely helpful in maintaining continuity at a time when we were adapting to rapidly changing circumstances. Charlie and I remain good friends to this day, and he has made a considerable contribution to this book.

I did not immediately replace Charlie as deputy director, but we needed someone proficient in spoken Russian to replace him in the field. We were fortunate to find Michael Haney, who had been working in the Russian section of the Stanford University Library. Michael held a BA in Russian Studies from Vassar College, and had spent time in the USSR working on a traveling exhibit for USIA. His Russian language skills were excellent, and he proved to be a first-rate field assistant.

Two other members of staff moved on in 1989. In May, Sallie Wise took up an important new position with the Radios in Washington D.C., serving as US representative for the RFE/RL Research Department in Munich. In her new function, Sallie acted as liaison between the Research Department and the US policy, academic, and journalistic communities, an essential link in the Radios' outreach.

In September, we were sad to lose Charlotte Pullen, who left us to move to the US with her future husband. Charlotte's functions as editor/translator were taken over by Elaine Ward, who held a BA in Russian from Saint Andrews, and was the third SAAOR recruit from that university.

THE “RESEARCH MACHINE”

SAAOR’s data processing operations were becoming more and more streamlined as we brought in new technology. In 1988, the introduction of an optical mark reader had made data entry faster and easier. In 1989, data analysis was stood on its head when Richard came across a state-of-the-art software package for data processing, with the tantalizing, if misleading, name of Research Machine, at the Digital Users Conference in Amsterdam. Research Machine was not actually a machine, but a software package of analytic programs. It was already used by a number of leading European survey research firms. We contacted the manufacturer and arranged to visit their UK headquarters to get a better idea of the product and see if it would fit our needs.

The headquarters of Pulse Train Technology (PTT) was located at Enigma House on Alan Turing Road in Guildford, Surrey. An intriguing address for an intriguing company name. Alan Turing was the mathematician who had broken the German codes on the Enigma machine during World War II. Was someone in the firm a veteran of Bletchley Park? We eventually discovered that the street and the building had been named by Alan Hendrickson, the founder and software architect of PTT. The company name referred to the “pulse train” that flows around the brain.

Alan Hendrickson was an American of Finnish descent. He was especially interested in memory, and had spent several years working on a project he referred to as the “memory molecule,” which he said, not altogether jokingly, might one day bring him a Nobel Prize. By a couple of strange coincidences, his grandparents came from a village in Western Finland close to where my grandmother’s family had lived (we might have been distant cousins!) and he was currently resident in Verbier, Switzerland, where Lynne and I had a holiday apartment. We later became very close to Alan and his wife Elaine. It was Elaine who managed day-to-day operations in Guildford. She came from Puget Sound near Seattle, and had a PhD in psychology. Sadly, Alan died in 1999, but Elaine, now retired and living in Devon, remains a good friend.

Although we did not meet Alan and Elaine on that first visit, the programmers at PTT gave us a thorough briefing on their product, and took us out for a great pub lunch. Both Richard and I liked the software package, and we signed a contract with PTT in early 1990.

MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN OPINION RESEARCH

It had long been my ambition to take the results of our attitude and opinion questions a stage further, and develop a more fundamental grasp of public opinion in the USSR. The attitudinal typology scale I developed in 1984 was a first step in this direction.¹¹² The second step came in 1989, when I met Françoise Hagnery of Agorametrie International at a ESOMAR conference in Seville, Spain. Hagnery had just given a fascinating presentation on public opinion structures in France. Listening to her talk, a light bulb went off in my head. Why not attempt something similar for the USSR? I sought her out when she had finished her presentation, and explained our work. We agreed to meet when we were back in Paris.

Agorametrie had been founded in 1977. It was an association open to both public institutions and private-sector opinion research firms. The public institutions included the Sorbonne and the Ministry of Industry and Research. Its goal was to develop a consistent methodology for monitoring public opinion. France was a leading nuclear force, and one of its missions was to track the evolution of public attitudes to nuclear power.¹¹³

Agorametrie's strength lay in the sophisticated theoretical and intellectual basis of its model, and the specific software that it had developed for analysis. In France, the methodology it used began by determining current areas of debate in French society, such as the desirability of nuclear power or the presence of immigrant workers. These were known as "conflict themes." They were deliberately controversial, and aimed to provoke a clear reaction from the respondent. A questionnaire measuring the respondent's level of agreement or disagreement with about 50 themes was administered. Finally, factor analysis was used to plot clusters of responses along horizontal and vertical axes with a pair of opposing attributes at each end.¹¹⁴ The result would be a four-dimensional perceptual map of French society.

The first dimension plotted responses along a horizontal axis whose attributes ranged from "order/tradition/stability" at one end to "liberation/change" at the other, and along a vertical axis whose attributes went from "satisfaction" to "dis-

¹¹² R. Eugene Parta, "Civil Liberties and the Soviet Citizen...", September 1984, HIA.

¹¹³ Memo from Parta to Marsh and Herrmann, "Meeting with M. Eric Stemmelen and Mme. Françoise Hagnery of Agorametrie, Paris, March 21, 1989," HIA.

¹¹⁴ Factor analysis is used to identify different attitudinal "types," based on a number of attitudes that are closely correlated.

satisfaction.” The quadrants thus derived provided a four-part value structure labelled *Communal*, *Pragmatic*, *Personal*, and *Egalitarian*.

The second dimension used demographic and other data to position different social groups within this structure. The third dimension examined the demographic data in terms of attitudes. The fourth dimension delved further into the characteristics of distinct social groups. Media consumption patterns could be plotted within the structure, and audiences could be defined in terms of their positioning.

It was immediately clear that if we could apply this to the Soviet Union we would achieve a major analytical breakthrough. The power of perceptual mapping lay in its ability to fuse all the available data into a structured view of a society. We would no longer be obliged to analyze Soviet opinions, attitudes, and media behavior in a vacuum. Instead they could be related to a much wider galaxy of viewpoints, mindsets, inclinations, and groupings within society. Audiences to Western radio could be defined, not just in demographic terms, but in terms of a broad range of social values. The importance of this for policy-makers and programmers was indisputable. A partnership with Agorametrie would enable us to achieve a better understanding of the turmoil the USSR was experiencing under Gorbachev’s reforms, and to delineate the role of RL in the new Soviet society.

As a first step, we needed to identify our conflict themes. My colleagues and I selected a broad range of themes which would lend themselves to this type of questioning. They were essentially taken from the Soviet press. One was, “Glasnost has not gone far enough,” and another was, “Stalin was a great leader, despite his faults.” In the new, freer media environment, debate had become more commonplace in Soviet media, which meant that we could query Soviet citizens with less risk of creating opinion artifacts than in the past.

Agorametrie approved our choice of themes,¹¹⁵ and we agreed to work together to develop a pilot study using 50 themes that targeted 200 respondents.¹¹⁶ We proposed to handle the field work with our usual institutes in Paris, Copenhagen, Athens, and Vienna. Interviewers would read out the list of themes to the respondent, who would express agreement or disagreement with each one on a five-point scale. We scheduled the field test for May so that we could have a final

¹¹⁵ A list of the conflict themes is provided in Appendix 4.

¹¹⁶ Memo from Parta to Marsh and Herrmann, “Meeting with M. Eric Stemmelen and Mme. Francoise Hagnery of Agorametrie, Paris, March 21, 1989,” 21 March 1989, HIA.

version of the questionnaire ready for the larger field by the end of the summer. Everything went as planned, the pilot was a success, and a new questionnaire incorporating conflict themes went into the field in September.

THE SWITCH TO OPEN INTERVIEWING

The introduction of conflict themes came hard on the heels of another huge innovation in the interviewing process. Earlier in the year, we had switched from indirect to direct interviewing—a move that would have been unthinkable just a few years earlier. Our interviewers had been instructed to approach Soviet travelers openly using a visible questionnaire.

In Copenhagen, Vienna, Greece, and Paris, the introduction of the new questionnaire was fairly straightforward. The INTORA institute in Vienna had been using an open questionnaire for some time already, so the concept was not new. By 1989, Soviet tourists were arriving in Vienna in increasing numbers. They came to shop. Their destination of choice was a giant new shopping center outside of town called Shopping City. A lot of visitors came in from Hungary by bus, or by Danube excursion boat from Budapest.¹¹⁷ Charlie Allen observed an interview with a traveler from Kaunas (Lithuania) who listened to several Western stations. He was clearly intrigued by the conflict themes read out at the beginning of the interview. None of the questions alarmed him, and he answered them all.

In Greece, the conflict themes were a source of difficulty because some of the interviewers found it difficult to read out the entire list aloud. Slavko suggested lowering their weekly quota of interviews to relieve the stress.¹¹⁸ A more serious problem was the approaching retirement of Christopher Geleklidis. Aware that we would soon be obliged to replace him, we contacted KEME, an institute that was about to start interviewing Bulgarians for EEAOR. Charlie met with Marianna Mouzaki of the KEME institute, and thought her organization would be able to take over from Metafrastiko Grafion.¹¹⁹

Switching to open interviewing had been plain sailing in Western Europe, but we were less sure how it would play in Eastern Europe. We did not introduce the open questionnaire until the fall of 1989, but when our Israeli institute IMA began using it in the field, there were no problems. The data obtained from the

¹¹⁷ Memo from Martyniuk to Parta via Allen, "Vienna TDY 23-25 January," 31 January 1989, HIA.

¹¹⁸ Memo from Martyniuk to Parta via Haney, "TDY Piraeus, Greece 11 to 13 September," 20 November 1989, HIA.

¹¹⁹ Charles Allen, Memo for the Record, "TDY of March 2-5, 1989 Greece," 6 March 1989, HIA.

first two months of open interviewing was consistent with that obtained from the last two months of indirect interviewing.¹²⁰ The fact that the former Soviet satellite countries had been distancing themselves from Moscow during the course of the year no doubt helped things go more smoothly.

That left Finland as the only hold-out in Europe. It had always been our most sensitive interviewing field. When we first broached the idea of open interviewing with Kari Kiuru, the director of KPR Marketing, he expressed apprehension. KPR did not participate in the pilot phase of the conflict themes, though Kiuru wrote a useful critique of the questionnaire.¹²¹ In the end KPR agreed to start open interviewing in December. This was a relief, since I had been worried they might drop out of the project. Payment rates were also a source of contention. When I visited Finland in late August, Kiuru had asked for a payment increase, citing the rising rate of inflation.¹²² However, our auditor pointed out that an increase would make Finland the most expensive interviewing field in Europe, even though the cost of living was considerably lower than in France or Germany.¹²³ One request that we were happy to meet was to provide KPR with questionnaires in English, rather than Russian. Many of KPR's interviewees were Balts, particularly Estonians, and Kari said that Russian-language questionnaires in open use created "a type of distrust."¹²⁴

EXPANSION INTO BELGIUM

Meanwhile, we extended citizen interviewing into Belgium thanks to Peter Herrmann of EEAOR, who put us in touch with a company called Field Service (no connection with our French institute of that name), who had once done some work for him. Field Service was a subsidiary of the largest research firm in Belgium. In November, I went to Brussels with Michael Haney to meet the director, Mme. Cukier, who had lined up nine candidate interviewers. Michael conducted a briefing in Russian on the questionnaire, from which it emerged that five of the candidates were still in their final year at interpreters' school, and would not be available for work until the following June. That left us with four potential interviewers, who showed varying degrees of promise. Two of them had worked on the EEAOR project.

120 Letter from Martyniuk to IMA, 15 January 1990, HIA.

121 Letter from Allen to KPR-Marketing, 1 June 1989, HIA.

122 Letter from KPR-Marketing to Parta, 20 September 1989, HIA.

123 Letter from Parta to KPR-Marketing, 23 October 1989, HIA.

124 Letter from KPR-Marketing to Haney, December 1989 (undated), HIA.

Michael conducted mock interviews with each one, and we agreed to do a pilot requiring each interviewer to conduct five interviews. It looked as though Brussels could become a useful sampling point. Michael had only been with SAAOR for a few months, but I was impressed with the way he handled the briefing and testing of the interviewer candidates. He was proficient in Russian and good at handling people, and he was proving a capable successor to Charlie in field work.

INTERVIEWING IN ASIA

Results in Asia continued to be disappointing. The interviews conducted in India were still not of sufficiently high quality to be entered into the database.¹²⁵ It was decided to put interviewing work there on hold until September, when the interviewers would be trained to use the open questionnaire. We were still anxious to make the India project work, and hoped the new questionnaire would be easier to use, and more interesting for respondent and interviewer alike.

In Japan, we decided regretfully to terminate the project. In March, Bill Hall of ASI Research sent me nine semi-completed interviews recorded on an old version of the questionnaire, which meant they could not be put into the database. He suggested that it was time “to close the books on this project,” observing that Masagaki, “despite his well-meaningness, is simply too busy to deliver.”¹²⁶ On top of that, Masagaki had apparently lost his principal interviewers. Masagaki suggested conducting interviews in the course of the regular phone calls he made to the USSR, but it wouldn’t have worked with our questionnaire, and I had to decline.

I was sad to end this project, because Shin-ichi Masagaki was one of the most inspiring and unusual people I ever worked with. He was a human dynamo bursting with energy, and a committed activist, but he also had a philosophical bent. A few years earlier, when we were outside a teahouse by a small lake in a Japanese garden, he had gone off to meditate. In his absence, his partner Miiko explained to me how busy he was, which was why he wasn’t able to work on the project at a level that met his standards. The message was clear. I should probably have ended operations there and then, but I was reluctant to do so. But now the time had come.

¹²⁵ Letter from Allen to Hankins, 24 April 1989, HIA.

¹²⁶ Letter from Hall to Parta, 22 March 1989, HIA.

Shin-ichi and I remained friends until his death from brain cancer fifteen years later. After they married in 1989, he and Miiko came to visit us in Paris, where he was arranging the sale of an expensive painting—another of his many sidelines. He died in 2004. I was in London preparing for the birthday celebration of a close Verbier friend at the prestigious Reform Club when the phone rang. I'd just got out of the shower and was dripping wet. It was Miiko calling from Tokyo to tell me that Shin-ichi was dying from a brain tumor. The news left me saddened and helpless. I would have liked to contact him, but he was already too far gone. When the champagne glasses were raised in a birthday toast that night at the Reform Club, I included a silent farewell to Shin-ichi Masagaki.

PROGRESS IN TURKEY

In Turkey, on the other hand, things were looking up. In September, at the ESO-MAR annual convention in Stockholm, I met a representative of PIAR, the leading market research firm in Turkey. In December I went to Istanbul to meet the managing director, Temel Aksoy, and his colleague Nesliham Abbasoglu, who would be working on our project.¹²⁷ Aksoy, who was in his 40s, came across as highly competent, with a friendly but business-like manner. PIAR was a member of Gallup International, and the operation struck me as being on a level with the best European organizations I had seen.

Thanks to Hassan Oraltay of the Kazakh service in Munich, I had four potential interviewers to propose to PIAR. Turkish is related to the Turkic languages of Central Asia, and our principal reason for operating in Turkey was to connect with Soviet visitors from that region. All four interviewer candidates had already encountered Central Asians, and none foresaw any difficulty in interviewing Soviet travelers. One of them noted that Soviet tourists were no longer being warned to avoid contacts with Turks. We set up a pilot study requiring each candidate to conduct six interviews. When we received the first interviews early in 1990, it was plain that the work was on the right track.¹²⁸

A second project in Istanbul concerned the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which was constantly in the headlines. We would have liked to organize a focus group on the subject with Azeri visitors to Turkey, but that was too hard to arrange. As a substitute, we arranged to conduct a series of in-depth interviews

¹²⁷ Parta Memo for the Record, "Field Trip to Turkey, 9–12 December 1989," 18 December 1989, HIA.

¹²⁸ Letter from Parta to Aksoy, PIAR Istanbul, 27 February 1990, HIA.

with individual Azeris to discuss RL programming on the Azeri-Armenian conflict. The deadline for this was March 1990, to allow us to prepare for a forthcoming RL Azeri service review. A future project with Armenian visitors to Turkey was also discussed.

FIRST ATTEMPTS AT IN-COUNTRY POLLING

Now that open interviewing outside the Soviet Union was functioning well, we hoped to graduate rapidly to in-country polling. An area that looked like fertile ground for preliminary survey work was the Baltic States. Estonia had declared sovereignty in 1988, and Latvia and Lithuania followed in 1989. In August, over two million people took part in the “Baltic Wave,” a human chain stretching from Lithuania, through Latvia, to Estonia. Western survey research organizations were making plans to move into the area. Gallup International, in collaboration with USIA, proposed to conduct an internal study in Lithuania based on 1,000 face-to-face interviews. SAAOR took part in a pilot study of 300 interviews in Latvia conducted by Canadian Facts, a Canadian market research organization, as well as an internal Estonian survey coordinated by BBC.¹²⁹

A number of other openings came our way through the professional association ESOMAR. Our problems with ESOMAR were long past, and as a member I made a point of attending their annual conference. Since it brought together survey research firms worldwide, it was an excellent source of contacts. At the Stockholm conference in 1989, I was able to talk to several organizations that were tentatively planning research projects in the USSR. At this stage everything was preliminary. Everyone was trying to figure out what was and was not possible. World Research International, the company which had organized our survey in the Afghan refugee camps, was exploring possible openings. The Finnish Gallup organization (Suomen Gallup) was putting out feelers in Estonia, and the following year we worked together on focus groups there. Gallup International was planning to work with a Soviet group on an omnibus survey in the USSR. They offered us the chance to add in a couple of questions. We didn’t take them up on it, as the project seemed to be going beyond what reasonable capabilities were in the USSR, though we worked with them later.

We also attempted to test the waters in Moscow. Anne-Danièle Merlero, who had grown up in the USSR, made a trip to Moscow in early 1989, and on her own

129 Memo from Parta to Marsh, “SAAOR Update,” 13 September 1989, HIA.

initiative suggested conducting some interviews during her stay.¹³⁰ Glasnost and perestroika had taken root, and surveys were being used more frequently by Soviet sociological institutions. How open would people be about their Western radio listening habits in the new climate?

ADM had a friend called Pyotr who worked for a statistical institute called Moscow Statistical Direction (MSD). He helped her get a permit allowing her to conduct a small survey, and provided her with a badge linking her to MSD. With Pyotr's help, ADM planned to conduct 30 interviews by telephone, plus 30 interviews face-to-face in a public place, to see which was more effective.

For the telephone interviews, ADM drew on a list furnished by MSD (there was no Moscow phone book). She and Pyotr compiled a sample of potential respondents by profession. They targeted a working-class district, Elektrozavodskaya, to ensure that some workers would be included in the sample. The calls were made from a room at the Cosmos hotel. ADM and Pyotr divided the calls equally between them. It was immediately obvious that Pyotr, who identified himself as a representative of MSD, was getting more refusals than ADM, who announced herself as belonging to a French statistical organization. (It was indispensable, she said, to employ a name like "Institute," "Direction," or "Center" that would be reassuring to Soviet ears.)

As ADM had suspected, the telephone part of the survey did not work well. Of 101 calls made, 71 hung up immediately and 14 refused to reply to any questions. Of those who responded, 14 said they were non-listeners to foreign radio, and only 4 acknowledged listening. Telephone surveys were plainly not a good way to measure the audience to foreign radio.

The second part of the pilot took place at the GUM shopping center, on Red Square in the center of Moscow. ADM and Pyotr, wearing identical identifying badges, positioned themselves at different entrances to GUM. The militia (city police) asked a few questions, but raised no objections. ADM had brought along some small souvenirs of Paris to attract the attention of passers-by: plastic bags with a picture of the Eiffel tower, Western cigarettes, inexpensive cigarette lighters. They were useful for breaking the ice and persuading people to respond to her questions. As had been the case with the telephone interviews, she was more successful than her Soviet partner. A few unpleasant remarks came her way, but the fact that she was a foreigner aroused curiosity and interest, and made for some

130 Sondage Service, "Rapport Technique: Etude de Sondage d'Essai Effectué à Moscou," March 1989, HIA.

lively conversations. ADM had a warm, accessible manner, and that probably helped. Pyotr had trinkets to hand out as well, but he had a lower success rate. Of the thirty questionnaires administered, 11 refused to respond, 10 said they didn't listen to Western radio, and nine said they were listeners.

ADM wanted to explore the possibility of working with a Soviet institute to carry out a more extensive survey, but we decided that it was too soon. We didn't know enough about Soviet conditions, and we were far from sure that we would get accurate estimates of radio listening.

PROGRAM REVIEWS WITH SOVIET TRAVELERS

1989 was the year we began using Soviet citizens traveling in the West for focus groups and program reviews. This would have been unthinkable a few years earlier, and it meant that the feedback we provided to programmers acquired a more pertinent and timely edge.

One of the first program reviews of the year compared news and commentary programs from three broadcasters: Radio Liberty, BBC, and VOA. The reviewing panel consisted of both citizens and emigrants. Each reviewer was given a cassette recorder, program tapes and a questionnaire to work on, and instructed to listen to the broadcasts as though they were in the Soviet Union. The three Western stations were rated well ahead of Soviet media. Radio Liberty was commended for providing information on the USSR that was not available from either other Western or Soviet sources. VOA's strong point was news on the United States. BBC, like VOA, was considered informative and objective. Broadcast tone was an issue in the case of RL: the station was sometimes seen as too sharp and too ironic.¹³¹

The next review addressed Radio Liberty's religious programming. Reviewers included five Soviet citizens traveling in the West plus two Soviet theologians: the Rev. Vladimir Shibaev, an Orthodox priest who had emigrated to Switzerland in 1987, and Viktor Aksyuchits, the editor of *Vybor* (Choice), an unofficial journal dealing with religious and philosophical questions, who still lived in Moscow. All the reviewers felt that there was enormous interest in religion in the Soviet Union, and that RL had an important role to play by providing thought-provoking programming on the topic. The programs heard were judged for the

¹³¹ Susan Roehm & SAAOR Staff, "News and News Commentary from RL, VOA and BBC," SPR 1-89, February 1989, HIA.

most part enriching and instructive, but reviewers wondered if some of the terminology might be incomprehensible to the average listener. Here again, issues of tone came up. Journalists who had worked for so long under very different circumstances were finding it hard to adapt to the ongoing changes in the Soviet Union and the altered expectations of their audience.¹³²

Expanding beyond Russian listeners to explore the national minority audience, we commissioned a panel review among Estonian travelers to Canada from Canadian Facts.¹³³ In Israel we recruited Prof. Isabella Kreindler, a Central Asian specialist who was fluent in both Kirghiz and Russian, to conduct focus groups among Central Asian travelers and recent arrivals. In Paris we taped in-depth interviews with visiting Soviet Armenians.

Our program of focus groups continued apace. Prof. Edward “Ned” Keenan, the Chairman of the History Department at Harvard, was recruited to conduct focus groups with Russian, Ukrainian, and Armenian travelers to the United States.¹³⁴ He had done focus groups for USIA on their *America Illustrated* magazine (distributed in the USSR), and in the summer he came to Paris for more groups with Soviet visitors.

RL’S NEW IMAGE IN SOVIET MEDIA

One thing was clear: Radio Liberty was now an accepted part of the Soviet media landscape. This became evident when Constantin Galskoy studied coverage of RL in Soviet media after the cessation of jamming.¹³⁵ It was clear that the climate had changed. While RL had once been abused and attacked in the Soviet press, it was now treated more neutrally. In some instances, it was even praised. Occasionally it was cited as a model that Soviet media should attempt to emulate. RL was now able to call on Soviet journalists and public figures for interviews, and was sometimes cited as a news source in Soviet media articles.

Earlier in the year we had videotaped ten in-depth interviews with Russian visitors to Paris, probing their perceptions of the major Western broadcasters to the USSR. The interviews were handled by a Paris-based market research firm

132 Susan Roehm & SAAOR Staff, “Review of Radio Liberty’s Religious Programming: *Religion in the Modern World and Not By Bread Alone*,” SPR 2-89, March 1989, HIA.

133 Letter from Roehm to Liepins, Canadian Facts, 13 January 1989, HIA.

134 Letter from Roehm to Keenan, 14 February 1989, HIA.

135 Constantin Galskoy, “Coverage of RFE/RL in Soviet Media Since Cessation of Jamming,” AR 7-89, December 1989, HIA.

called VideoSpot. The director of the company, Vladimir Brijatoff, came from a Russian emigré family, and took a personal interest in the Radios. I was impressed by the sophisticated psychological techniques employed, and by the open manner in which the Soviets participated.¹³⁶ The point of the project was to get a handle on RL's image in the Soviet Union, and help us understand how it was perceived alongside other Western radios. It transpired that, compared to official national broadcasters such as VOA, BBC, and Deutsche Welle, RL was seen as somewhat of an outlier. This status carried both positive and negative implications, and gave us food for thought.

Another intriguing development was the publication of some Soviet-sponsored research into the audience to Western radio.¹³⁷ An informal survey of University of Vilnius students, though displaying some methodological shortcomings, showed widespread listening to Western radio, especially Radio Liberty, which was the students' first choice. An article published in *Kommunist Tajikistana* also showed high rates of Western radio listening. Even though the piece attributed relatively low rates of listening to RL, it was remarkable that foreign radio stations were even mentioned in an official publication.

IMPACT OF REFORM ON SOVIET SOCIETY

After four years of reform, we were beginning to get a clearer picture of how glasnost and perestroika had affected Soviet society. We had been concerned that the influence of glasnost on Soviet media would diminish the importance of foreign radio, but these fears proved unfounded. In a study of over 5,000 respondents, 42% cited foreign radio as an important source of information.¹³⁸ Ten years earlier, in 1979, the figure had been only 33%. Foreign radio remained a crucial part of the information mix in the confused Soviet media environment of the late 1980s.

Another important question was this: Had perestroika made a difference to the average Soviet citizen? The consensus was that, in economic terms, it had not. The reforms were considered more successful in terms of glasnost and increased freedom of expression than in terms of economic improvement. Optimism about the reforms was giving way to uncertainty, and some respondents were plainly

¹³⁶ Memo from Parta to Marsh, HIA.

¹³⁷ Amy Corning, "Soviet Studies of Audiences to Foreign Radio Broadcasts (Radio Vilnius and Kommunist Tajikistana), RM 3-89, August 1989, HIA.

¹³⁸ Mark Rhodes, "Glasnost Has Not Diminished the Importance of Foreign Radio," RM 2-89, July 1989, HIA.

looking beyond their immediate economic situation to reflect on the problems at the root of Soviet society.¹³⁹

One thing was sure: freedom of expression was increasing. This was visible in the rapidly developing phenomenon of “informal” (*neformalnyi*) groups, that is, groups which were organized outside official structures. In a previous era they would have been forbidden, but by 1989 they numbered in the thousands. One prominent example was the Latvian National Front, but there were many other groups dealing with historical questions, political issues, and other spheres of Soviet life. How were these groups viewed by the population at large? A study of Soviet citizens showed that informal groups were more favorably viewed by Western radio listeners than non-listeners. Non-listeners feared that they might have a destabilizing influence.¹⁴⁰

OVERVIEW OF SURVEY RESEARCH IN USSR

After several years of perestroika, opinion research was becoming increasingly prominent in the USSR. Previously it had been more or less banned,¹⁴¹ but now a variety of official, semi-official, and independent survey research organizations were springing up. At the end of 1989, Amy Corning, an analyst on our staff, put together an extensive overview of the survey research scene in the USSR.¹⁴² We thought it would be helpful to list the different organizations and examine their capabilities.

Amy's report earned a lot of respect. It served as an operating manual for Western organizations attempting to get projects off the ground in the Soviet Union. She outlined the growth of public opinion research in the Soviet Union, and evoked the difficulties involved in attempting to move from the ideological perspective required by the Communist Party to a wholly empirical scientific approach, profiling the few brave and rigorous sociologists who did their best to conduct objective research, such as Boris Grushin, Yuri Levada, and Tatiana Zaslavskaya.¹⁴³

139 Sallie Wise, “Has Perestroika Made a Difference? Some Soviet Citizens' Views,” RM 1-89, April 1989, HIA.

140 Amy Corning, “Informal Groups in the USSR: Some Soviet Citizens' Views,” AR 5-89, September 1989, HIA.

141 An exception was the Institute of Sociology of the USSR Academy of Sciences, but they were limited in what they were able to do.

142 Amy Corning, “Recent Developments in Soviet Public Opinion Research,” AR 6-89, October 1989, HIA.

143 All three were involved in the founding of VTsIOM in 1987. VTsIOM, whose first director was Zaslavskaya, was known as the All-Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion, and was the first organization dedicated to the study of public opinion in the age of perestroika. It was the cradle that

The report examined the existing organizations in more detail than was generally available to Western scholars, taking care to note which had Party, government, or academic affiliation, and which were semi-independent. It clarified the problems that existed with regard to survey infrastructure; sampling design in a geographically vast multi-ethnic state; and the lack of a cadre of sufficiently trained sociologists. It covered issues of response validity; high non-response rates (which particularly affected interviewees contacted by telephone); and the fact that public opinion results were often rejected by the authorities. Amy's report became one of the most sought-after of SAAOR's publications.¹⁴⁴

THE BERLIN WALL IS OPENED

The Conference on International Broadcasting Audience Research (CIBAR) had come into being in Cologne a few years earlier as the result of an informal get-together of audience research heads from international broadcasters that included BBC and VOA, as well as Radio France International and Radio Netherlands. It was such an exclusive gathering that we could all fit around a small table in Deutsche Welle's canteen for dinner. Our host was Wolfgang Pleines, the head of Deutsche Welle audience research, and he served us wine from his personal cellar.

From these humble beginnings we gradually grew into a much larger grouping with members worldwide. Our annual conferences became more formal, and featured presentations from the different broadcasters. China showed up once, and a few years later, after the end of the USSR, I had the unexpected privilege of recommending Radio Moscow International, later to become the Voice of Russia, as a member. I served for several years on a committee under the auspices of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) to set "industry" standards in audience measurement, and later became chairman of CIBAR.

In November 1989, the annual conference was held in Paris, and hosted by Radio France International. One of the main topics of discussion was how to approach survey work with research groups in the USSR and Eastern Europe. My view was that we should explore every possibility, but take the precaution of

spawned a number of other independent survey research organizations later such as Grushin's Vox Populi and the Public Opinion Foundation. VTsOM rapidly developed a reputation for objective and professional survey research.

¹⁴⁴ An updated version of the report was published in January 1992, after the failed coup of the previous year: Amy Corning, "Public Opinion, Market, and Media Research in the USSR," AR 1-92, 7 January 1992, HIA.

engaging in pilot projects before committing to large studies. For one thing, we needed to evaluate the competence of research groups in these still communist countries. For another, it was unclear how candid respondents would be after decades of communist rule. Were they likely to trust state institutions carrying out studies? I was backed by Guy Robert, the head of Audience Research at Radio France Internationale, who agreed that we should take a cautious approach and avoid rushing in before we understood what we were dealing with. Others, however, were anxious to immediately engage in full-scale surveys. This was to become a bone of contention the following year.

The conference took a new and unexpected turn on Thursday, November 9. That was the night the Berlin Wall was opened. When we reconvened on Friday morning, Wolfgang Pleines of Deutsche Welle got to his feet, gathered his papers, and shakily announced in a voice filled with emotion that he was returning immediately to his own country. And then he added, “It is now a different country!” The fall of the Wall opened the door to a new era for our broadcasting organizations, and our work as audience researchers.

1990

USSR events

Increasingly unpopular, and with USSR disintegrating, Gorbachev moves to the right.

- January: Baku: Soviet army intervenes against Azeri nationalists.
- February: Tajikistan: State of emergency in Dushanbe.
- March: Lithuania declares independence.
- March: Moscow: Abolition of “leading role” of CPSU (Constitution Article 6).
- March: Gorbachev elected President of USSR.
- May: Red Square: Gorbachev booed during May Day demonstrations.
- May: Latvia declares independence.
- May: Yeltsin elected president of Russian Parliament.
- June: RSFSR declares sovereignty.
- July: Kohl and Gorbachev reach agreement on German unification.
- July: Ukraine declares sovereignty.
- July: Belorussia declares sovereignty.
- August: Tajikistan and Turkmenistan declare sovereignty.
- September: Signing of 4+2 treaty on Germany unification.
- September: Maneuvers by Ryazan Airborne Division. Protests against food shortages in Moscow.

- October: Germany reunifies.
- October: Kazakhstan declares sovereignty (last of republics to do so).
- October: Law passed on freedom of worship.
- December: Gorbachev surrounded by hardliners. Shevardnadze resigns, warning of forthcoming dictatorship; Yakovlev withdraws.

The disintegration of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe was followed by the gradual fragmentation of the Soviet Union as one republic after another declared national sovereignty. There was unrest in Azerbaijan and Tajikistan at the beginning of 1990, and conflict between Uzbeks and Kirghiz in the Fergana Valley in June.

With the end of CP domination of Soviet society in sight, Gorbachev attempted to switch his power base. From General Secretary of the CPSU, he became President of the USSR. Despite his attempts at reform, his unpopularity was growing. By the end of the year his need to placate the conservative resistance left him dependent on relative hardliners such as Yanaev and Pavlov.¹⁴⁵

The hints of an incipient crackdown did not prevent SAAOR from finally stepping on Soviet turf and preparing to conduct survey work with Soviet citizens inside the USSR, though it took a while to get up to speed. Knowing that internal surveys were likely to be biased, our first step was to figure out how best to counter the bias. Our initial meetings with Soviet researchers dealt mainly with methodology. Before anything else happened, we had to establish how to work reliably inside the USSR. Attempts to obtain listener ratings would come later.

We began work in the Baltic States, which were more easily accessible to Western researchers than the rest of the country. Focus groups were conducted in Estonia, and preliminary survey work started in Latvia. I made my first trip to Moscow, Kyiv, and Riga in September to inaugurate preliminary polls in Russia and Ukraine, and monitor the ongoing work in Riga.

During this time we continued to work with Soviet travelers on focus groups and surveys. The Agorametrie opinion structure methodology took our traveler interviews into a new dimension. By the end of the year, we no longer required a whole year's traveler data to provide Western radio listening figures. We planned to switch to a system based on two surveys per year, each lasting 3-4 months, but

¹⁴⁵ See Vladislav Zubok, *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021). This is the most detailed account to date of the complex issues involved in the implosion of the USSR.

in-country interviewing went faster than planned, and only one four-month traveler survey ever took place.

In sum, 1990 was a bridge year during which we moved towards in-country interviewing in the USSR and gradually wound down our projects with Soviet travelers and emigrants.

1990 marked the anniversary of my 25th year at RFE/RL, and I was gratified to receive a letter from RFE/RL President Gene Pell recognizing SAAOR's contribution to the organization:

SAAOR's reports have served as a unique and credible means to better understand our audience in the Soviet Union. Without these reports, our programmers would have had little knowledge of listeners' program preferences and attitudes toward the radios. In this respect, your work and the work of your very competent staff has been indispensable.¹⁴⁶

FIRST CONTACTS WITH SOVIET RESEARCHERS

In January 1990, Amy Corning met Dr. Elena Bashkistrova of the Institute of Sociology of the USSR Academy of Sciences in London.¹⁴⁷ This was our first direct contact with a Soviet researcher. Bashkistrova had been invited to London by Gallup International to discuss opportunities for survey work in the RSFSR. After talking to Amy, she called me from London, and we discussed ways in which we might work together.

Bashkistrova felt it was too early to envisage a large-scale media survey in the Soviet Union, given the lack of research infrastructure. She proposed a more modest study based on a sample of Moscow residents. This seemed like a good idea, and I told her we would provide her with a machine-readable questionnaire. Her enthusiasm increased. She said it would signal to the interviewers the seriousness and professionalism of the project. However, she cautioned me that rates of listening to RL were likely to be on the low side. Not everyone would be prepared to admit to a Soviet interviewer that they listened to RL. The response-bias issue was precisely what worried me.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Pell to Parta, 26 February 1990, HIA.

¹⁴⁷ Memo from Parta to Marsh, "Contacts with Institute of Sociology, USSR Academy of Sciences," 30 January 1990, HIA. Attached to this memo was a Memo for the Record by Amy Corning, "Summary of telecon between Gene Parta and Dr. Elena Bashkistrova of the Institute of Sociology, USSR Academy of Sciences, 22 January 1990," 23 January 1990, HIA.

Bashkirova suggested that we meet in Moscow in the spring for further discussions. The Institute of Sociology at the Academy of Sciences would be prepared to issue me with a visa invitation. I put the proposal to Bill Marsh, suggesting that I might travel to Moscow in May, but he and Gene Pell decided that it was better to delay any formal undertaking for the time being.¹⁴⁸

PREMATURE LARGE-SCALE SURVEYS IN USSR

But while RFE/RL management hesitated, SAAOR was in danger of being left behind. Our traveler survey was no longer the reference point for audience research on the USSR. The opportunities afforded by the opening up of the USSR had impelled several of the main Western broadcasters to jump on the bandwagon and commission their own surveys—even though the accuracy and validity of internal USSR surveys was far from certain.

USIA in particular was anxious to go their own way. They had for some time been convinced that SAAOR's estimates of shortwave radio audiences overstated audience size, and that listeners were less numerous than our data claimed. According to Mark Rhodes, our man in Washington, the USIA Office of Research was determined to present their own audience figures. Mark felt they were anxious to conduct a large-scale All-Union survey so as to make the greatest possible political impact in Washington. They commissioned an internal survey of Western radio listening in the USSR from a firm called Vox Populi, headed by the sociologist Boris Grushin. Mark's office was located on the premises of USIA, so he was well aware of the organization's agenda. In a memo the following year, he wrote: "The director of USIA research was determined that USIA be the first to conduct Western-style surveys in the USSR and Eastern Europe. The 'first survey' angle was very prominently displayed when results were reported both orally at meetings and conferences and in research publications."¹⁴⁹

Grushin had made it plain to USIA that they were not buying "a Western-quality survey" of the USSR, given that there were major problems with sample design, interviewer capability, and lack of professional survey analysts. This did not deter them. Their survey took place in the summer of 1990. The results showed a high level of non-response to the question on foreign radio listening.

¹⁴⁸ Fax from Marsh to Parta, "Your memo of 30 January," 9 February 1990, HIA.

¹⁴⁹ Mark Rhodes, Memo for the Record. "USIA Internal Survey on Soviet Media and Public Opinion," 7 February 1991, HIA.

Since the questionnaire had not allowed for the risk of response-bias stemming from fear or prudence, USIA analysts made the assumption that these were all non-listeners. Unsurprisingly, overall listenership figures for Western radio were lower than those of SAAOR's traveler surveys. Another problem was that the questionnaire listed Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty separately, and this caused respondents some confusion. RFE did not broadcast in Russian but the similarity of the names caused many RL listeners to give a response to RFE, making it difficult to determine a final listening rate for RL. Mark hypothesized that the survey was being used for political purposes. USIA had their eye on expanding into television rather than emphasizing radio, which was where the funding was going, and he felt this might have led them to de-emphasize radio listening.

Our relations with USIA appeared to be headed toward competition rather than partnership, but we undertook a number of joint survey projects with BBC in the Baltic States. The findings of the internal surveys were remarkably close to those of SAAOR's traveler surveys. In 1989, SAAOR findings had shown that about 29% of the Baltic adult population listened once a week or more to Western radio. Findings from the internal surveys showed Latvia at 28%, Estonia at 30% and Lithuania at 34%.

But then the BBC decided to conduct an experimental survey in Moscow, using both telephone and face-to-face methods.¹⁵⁰ The survey went into the field in May, and we only learned about it at the last minute. I was dismayed not to have been informed earlier, especially in light of our work together in the Baltic States and our generally good working relationship. Had I been consulted at the planning and implementation stage, the questionnaire could have been significantly improved. I got another unpleasant surprise when it turned out that BBC had no plans to monitor the study in the field. For in-country studies it was vital to know how the work was being conducted. Some of the pilot work had been observed by the BBC's David Ostry, who confirmed my fears about response-bias by noting that some questions still provoked fear or reticence. Spontaneous acknowledgement of RL listening was particularly rare.

The BBC's rush job helped me make my case for a personal visit to the USSR. The Western broadcasters currently planning surveys did not have SAAOR's three decades of experience behind them. If their studies were not conducted according to the standards of Western survey research, the results could be seri-

¹⁵⁰ Memo from Parta to Marsh, "Internal USSR Surveys by Other Western Broadcasters," 5 May 1990, HIA.

ously misleading. I was determined not to let inexperienced researchers jeopardize the work we had been doing for years. Bill Marsh agreed that SAAOR could undertake its own survey work in the Soviet Union.

I applied for a visa to visit the USSR in September, and set arrangements in motion for a visit to Moscow, Kyiv, and Riga. I planned to visit Bashkirova, Grushin, and other sociologists in Moscow, observe the focus groups being organized for us there by Suomen Gallup and VNIKS,¹⁵¹ touch base with sociologists we were in contact with in Kyiv, and evaluate the survey work that was underway in Riga.

PREPARING THE TRIP

It was of course by no means sure that I would be granted a visa. The Soviet authorities knew exactly who I was, and I had been attacked more than once by name on Soviet television and in the press. But “Colonel” Parta was not discouraged! Aside from my professional need to assess what could feasibly be done on the ground in the USSR, I was quite simply curious to see at first hand the country I had spent my life studying without ever setting foot there. RFE/RL employees had been barred from visiting Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union until just a few months previously.

As Bashkirova had promised, the Institute of Sociology of the Soviet Academy of Sciences was prepared to sponsor my visa application but, when the research group Baltic Connections also offered to sponsor me through their Riga affiliate, I decided to take them up on their offer in order to avoid the Moscow bureaucracy. The Latvian National Front issued me with a formal visa request, signed by their leader Dainis Ivans, and I submitted it to the USSR consulate in Paris for a trip in September 1990. At this point only one or two people from the RFE/RL Russian service had been issued visas to the USSR. My application would be one of the first from RFE/RL. Patricia, our editor, had visited Moscow and Leningrad in June 1990 but, with no public profile, she traveled with a French tourist group and passed herself off as a housewife. Surveillance was minimal: she was able to absent herself from the group on a couple of occasions to research locations for a novel she was writing about dissidents in Leningrad (later published as *The Angels of Russia*). The only false note was a young woman who attached herself to the tour group,

¹⁵¹ VNIKS was the Research Institute for the State of the Market and Demand, which operated under the USSR Ministry of Trade. It was essentially a market research operation conducting consumer studies, set up as a joint venture with Suomen (Finnish) Gallup.

claiming to be the wife of a French engineer on assignment in Leningrad, and made a point of working her way through the group and talking to everyone. Most of the tourists were elderly, and apparently failed to notice that their new friend sat down to chat in Russian with the tour guide at mealtimes, and that there was never any sign of her alleged French husband.

Suomen Gallup and VNIKS had set dates for their Moscow focus groups in mid-September. I reserved my flights, and booked myself into the venerable Hotel National, built in 1903, near Red Square in Moscow. Then I booked onward flights to Kyiv and Riga. The visa application required flight reservations and a hotel booking for each stop on the itinerary. Finally, as a precautionary measure, I booked a second flight to Moscow leaving three days after the first one. It was just as well that I did.

I had submitted my visa application in late spring, thinking that would give them plenty of time to process it. By late August I still hadn't heard back. Nicole called the Soviet consulate, who informed her that I was a special case requiring a high-level approval from the Foreign Ministry. I was not flattered. The day of my flight came and went. The day after that, Nicole got a call from the consulate. My visa would be ready the following day. That was the day of my second flight—as they were doubtless aware. It was going to be tight. No doubt they knew that too.

The consulate opened at 07:00. My flight was due to leave around 10:00. Michael Haney was at the consulate at opening time to pick up the visa. Lynne drove me to the consulate, Michael shoved the visa through the car window, and we headed north to Charles-de-Gaulle airport. It was the morning rush hour. Halfway there, traffic ground to a halt. Undeterred, Lynne pulled on to the shoulder of the highway and we raced along for several nerve-racking miles with one tire on the shoulder and one on the edge of the ditch. We reached the airport in record time. Boarding time had passed, but I was in luck. The flight had been delayed, and they let me board. As soon as we were in the air, I ordered champagne. Thank God for Air France!

WELCOME TO MOSCOW

When the plane began its descent to Sheremetyevo airport, a light rain was falling and it was getting dark. At Passport Control, the officer took my passport, gave me a long stare, and typed something into the computer. His phone rang. And then it rang again. Several minutes passed like this with about a half dozen short calls. I began to get nervous. He returned my passport and pointed me to

baggage claim. All items of incoming baggage were individually screened by X-ray. A Customs officer led me aside, and picked through my baggage item by item. He even squeezed the toothpaste. Then he turned his attention to the shoulder bag which contained all my papers for the trip. He took the lot and disappeared. He was gone for twenty minutes. By then I was wondering why "Colonel" Parta had thought he could walk into the lion's den and get away with it. Eventually the official came back with my papers, which had presumably all been photocopied, and I emerged into the arrivals lounge where a nervous Leila Lotti of Suomen Gallup, the company in charge of the focus groups, was waiting for me with a car and driver to take me to the Hotel National.

The National was a stone's throw from the Kremlin, and I could see a red star glowing eerily through the rain. The hotel lobby was more or less deserted, except for a man in a long leather coat who looked me over carefully. The receptionist admonished me in English for arriving two days late. I replied that the Foreign Ministry had delayed my visa. She said I was lucky to have a room at all, as parts of the hotel were being remodeled and many guests had been transferred to the Cosmos Hotel, well out of the city center. Then an elderly porter took my bag, and escorted me to what passed as a room. The window curtain was sagging, and so was the bed. Apparently this was a room slated for re-modeling. I took a swig of the Scotch I had bought at duty free and stretched out. Then the phone rang. The receptionist informed me in English that I had been given the wrong room, and they were sending someone to take me to a better room.

The new room was much better, and the corridor was supervised by a "dezhurnaya" sitting morosely at her desk, keeping track of everyone's comings and goings. I had some more Scotch and went to bed. Again the phone rang. The caller asked for somebody in Russian. Caught off guard, I told him in the same language that he had the wrong room. No doubt they were making sure that the phone was in good bugging order, but as a bonus they now knew that I spoke Russian.

PERESTROIKA, BEER, AND FAX MACHINES

At 11:00 next morning, I was due to meet Prof. Boris Grushin in the hotel lobby. Before setting up his own survey research firm, Vox Populi, Grushin had worked with Dr. Tatyana Zaslavskaya at VTsIOM,¹⁵² and before that at the Institute of

¹⁵² VTsIOM, the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion, was founded in 1987 under perestroika. It was widely recognized in its early years as an objective and professional operation.

Sociology of the USSR Academy of Sciences. He was short and energetic, with twinkling eyes and a friendly manner. His glasses were broken and sat lop-sidedly on his nose.

He suggested we go for a beer. It turned out that he was somewhat of an expert on beers, having written a book on the beer cellars of Prague during a stint on the international magazine *Problems of Peace and Socialism*. In earlier years, his sociological work had come under critical scrutiny from the powers-that-be, and he had spent time in Prague to get away from the repressive atmosphere of Moscow. When the beer arrived, he decided to order lunch as well, which was awkward. I had arranged to meet Leila Lotti and the focus group moderator, Natalya Cherkassova, the director of VNIKS, at the Radisson Hotel at one o'clock for lunch, but it looked as though I would just have to have lunch twice.

Although he had so far done survey work only for USIA, not SAAOR, we had cemented our ties with Grushin some time earlier. In the course of a visit to Washington, he had asked USIA if they could provide him with a fax machine he desperately needed, but bureaucratic red tape prevented them from acceding to his request. When Mark mentioned this to me, I had the idea of hiring Grushin for a one-day consultancy to review some of our pending projects, and paying him a fee large enough to cover the cost of a fax machine. This had worked perfectly. In the middle of lunch, Boris suddenly remembered our rescue mission, leapt to his feet, grabbed my hand in both of his, and said loudly in Russian, "Thank you very much for the fax machine!" Then he ordered more beers and told me all about Vox Populi. The hands of the clock moved past one o'clock. I became increasingly nervous. I was going to be late, and I had no way of warning Leila Lotti. But the meeting was worth it. We worked closely with Grushin in the following years, and he paid an extended visit to our offices in 1992.

THE VICTORY OF COMMUNIST LABOR

By the time I arrived at the Radisson, it was past three o'clock. Lotti and Cherkassova had finished lunch, and were about to give up on me. My excuses did not impress them, but they gave me a briefing on the focus groups which were to be held the next day.

The Moscow focus groups were an ambitious project, and they had been thoroughly prepared. Susan Roehm had met with Leila Lotti in Helsinki to lay the groundwork. The moderator's guide had been tested with a trial group of Soviet

citizens visiting Paris. The moderator of the Paris group was a French Sovietologist, Françoise Thom, and the theme dealt specifically with the question of conducting surveys in the USSR. At the beginning of the discussion, the group of travelers said that it would be difficult to discuss Radio Liberty in the USSR since the station had long been linked with the CIA and consistently attacked in domestic media. Later, however, after they relaxed and opened up, the participants changed their minds. They conceded that almost any topic, Radio Liberty included, could be broached with Soviet citizens, and that they would be willing to discuss it. This turned out to be close to the case, although our later experience showed that some reticence remained.

Four focus groups in Moscow were held in all. The purpose of the exercise was to find out how Soviet people felt about opinion surveys, explore their willingness to respond openly and honestly, and shed light on areas of potential bias. The groups were to be followed by a survey project which would test three different approaches to gathering data in the field.

Virginie Coulloudon, a French journalist who had already moderated groups for us in Paris, had done two groups before I arrived. Cherkassova, a pleasant lady in her fifties, handled another two. These were the two I attended. The groups were held on the premises of VNIKS. Above the lectern in the conference room was a large profile of Lenin with the inscription: "We are approaching the Victory of Communist Labor, V.I. Lenin." I got someone to take my picture next to this, knowing the Paris office staff would be amused.

My role in the groups was that of a fly on the wall. No mention was made of my connection with Radio Liberty. The participants were told that I was connected to Suomen Gallup. They ignored me. Cherkassova was a competent moderator, and the focus groups went smoothly. The participants were all in their twenties and thirties, with technical or higher education. After some initial hesitation, they proved willing to discuss Western radio openly in the context of the overall Soviet media environment. (The discussions were being taped for subsequent analysis, and there was some awkwardness when the moderator's assistant had to change the cassettes, since this interrupted the flow. In one unfortunate instance this happened just as the discussion was turning to the topic of Western radios and Radio Liberty.)

VOA seemed to be popular for its music programs, and BBC was singled out for objective world news. Radio Liberty was judged mostly positively, though a certain reticence crept in when they discussed the station. RL was viewed as more politically-oriented than the other stations, and more critical of the USSR.

After decades of being pilloried in Soviet media, RL seemed still to be a sensitive subject. This confirmed my fear that it would be difficult to get honest answers in a larger survey.

OLD IMAGES DIE HARD

In an attempt to follow up on this, I decided to try and speak to some of the young people in an informal setting. Another group was scheduled for late afternoon the following day, and my idea was to invite the participants for drinks and snacks after the session. I booked a private dining room at the Hotel National, and invited them to join me when the discussion was over. They were clearly surprised, and seemed unsure how to react. This was not on the program. Cherkassova couldn't join us since she had to go home, but she encouraged them to accept, and we all headed off to the National. I doubt that any of them had set foot there before. This was probably one of the reasons for their hesitation, not to mention the fact that their host was a foreigner.

I had arranged for the table to be set for eight. When we arrived, the plates were already piled high with *zakuski* (hors d'oeuvres), which I hadn't ordered. The waiter said that this was standard procedure when someone booked a private room. Next he showed up with a bottle of unsolicited vodka, and we had the mandatory toast, which actually turned out well. The alcohol set them at ease, loosened their tongues, and led to an open discussion.

Talking to these young people made a lot of things clearer. They confirmed my suspicion that Russians would be reluctant to discuss foreign radio listening with fellow Russians. They claimed that as many as half the foreign radio listeners in the RSFSR would not admit this to a survey researcher, especially a fellow Soviet. They thought this was particularly true of older people and rural inhabitants. One of them said: "We carry in our genes the fear of the consequences of what we say."

Next day I met with Lotti and Cherkassova to figure out how to handle our survey project in Moscow. We decided that VNIKS would organize 300 trial interviews over the next few months, using three different interview methods: face-to-face interviewing;¹⁵³ face-to-face interviewing with a protected-response

¹⁵³ The face-to-face questionnaire had been designed by Amy Corning in collaboration with Dr. Norman Bradburn of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. This was the method we eventually adopted.

procedure to maintain confidentiality;¹⁵⁴ self-completion with anonymity guaranteed.¹⁵⁵ This would allow us to determine the kind of problems we would encounter when conducting broader surveys.¹⁵⁶

Basically the question was this: Could we accept survey responses at face value? My feeling was that we couldn't yet. I didn't think survey respondents would hesitate to admit listening to VOA or BBC, but I suspected they would be reluctant to admit listening to Radio Liberty. Even though media attacks on the station had ceased and jamming had been suspended, old images die hard. Surveys of foreign radio listening on Soviet soil could not be correctly interpreted without bearing this factor in mind.

Before leaving Moscow, I had another couple of meetings with Boris Grushin and some of his former colleagues at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, including Dr. Polina Kozyreva and Dr. Mikhail Kosolapov, as well as with Elena Bashkirova, whom Amy had met in London. They had all known of our work with Soviet travelers and emigrés, and had seen many of our reports (spirited out of Munich by some KGB plant, no doubt). They were fascinated by the fact that we had been able to conduct traveler surveys that turned out to have such a high degree of validity. I wanted to get a sense of the kind of surveys they might be able to conduct on our behalf, and I was happy to meet Bashkirova in person after our talks on the phone. No concrete projects were discussed at this time, but we eventually developed a close working relationship with Bashkirova that would last for more than a decade.

THE MOOD IN MOSCOW

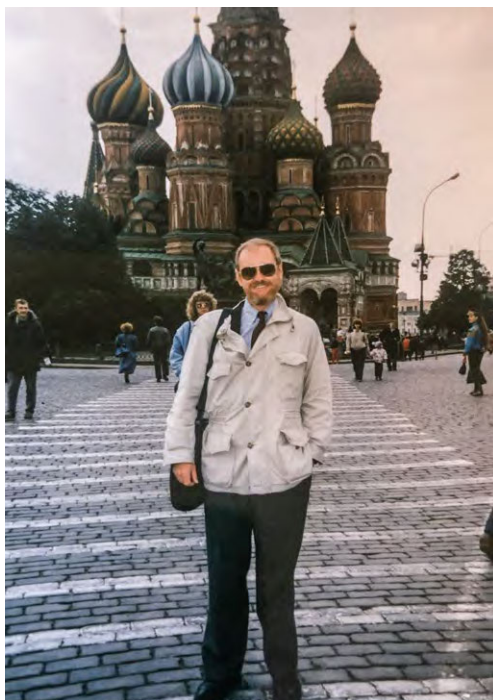
Moscow was opening up to new possibilities, but the mood in the city was tense and exhausted. Rumors were circulating about the murder of a reform-minded Orthodox priest, as well as some odd military maneuvers that were passed off by the army as potato-picking. It looked as though the hardliners were poised to take back control. Despite the security I had encountered at the airport on arrival,

154 The protected response procedure had been worked out with Prof. Joseph Straubhaar of Michigan State University, who had experimented with it in Latin America. It involved a coin-toss procedure, too detailed to describe here, which was meant to provide anonymity of response to sensitive questions. We used it in the Moscow tests described here, and later in Ukraine, but concluded it would be too complicated to implement in a large-scale survey.

155 Self-completion did not get a high enough return to warrant pursuing this method.

156 Memo from Parta to Marsh, "Surveys Inside the USSR," 24 September 1990, HIA.

15. Author on Red Square in September 1990 on first visit to USSR.



I wasn't aware of any personal surveillance. Of course, if it had been done well, I wouldn't have noticed.

Although I moved round the city a lot with the splendidly decorated Metro, I had little time for sightseeing. I went to take a look at the Lubyanka, the KGB's headquarters, still the heart of the Evil Empire, but I didn't get inside the Kremlin. Moscow was starting to show halting signs of Westernization, such as a Pizza Hut that had been built, but wasn't yet open for business because of a problem with permits. What struck me most as I moved round was the food situation. SAAOR had been collecting data on the price and availability of foodstuffs for nearly ten years, but in Moscow I saw the shortages for myself, and what I saw was shocking. Breakfast at the Hotel National seemed to consist of whatever they had been able to scrounge up on that particular day. One morning all we had were two wieners and bread. This was in sharp contrast to the elaborate *zakuski* that had been provided for our private group, but of course that was paid for separately (and it wasn't cheap), whereas breakfast was included in the room price. At the high-end *gastronom* food store on Gorky Street, there was plenty of vodka on the shelves but virtually no food except for large jars of green tomato and cucumber pickles. Further up the street, there was a long line outside the recently

opened McDonalds on Pushkin Square. To keep from keeling over with hunger, I took to getting in line as soon as I saw a street vendor selling something like stuffed *pirogi*. According to one rumor, food was being stockpiled in the countryside to sabotage perestroika.

KYIV BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

My next stop was Kyiv.¹⁵⁷ The flight was uneventful, but when we landed my suitcase was not with the rest of the baggage piled up on the grass outside the arrival terminal. I was directed to the Intourist office, which was at the far end of the arrivals hall, and by the time I got there my suitcase was sitting waiting for me. Had it been given some kind of special treatment? I was so relieved to have it back that I didn't worry about it. I took a cab to the Hotel Lebed (meaning Swan), a modern hotel about a mile from the city center, recommended by Ségolène Mykolenko, who had stayed there with her Ukrainian husband before she came to work for SAAOR.

Waiting for me in the hotel lobby was Irina McKeehan of IVM Joint National Consultants. Irina was the daughter of an erstwhile radio employee, Nina Jordan, now retired, whom I had met when I worked in Radio Liberty's New York office in 1965. Irina had been in Ukraine a few months earlier to arrange for interviewer training and test interviews. She had contacted on my behalf two prominent Ukrainian sociologists, Prof. Valery Khmelko and Prof. Vladimir Paniotto, who headed the Research Institute of the Ukrainian Sociological Association. Irina had met Paniotto in 1989 when he had spent two months at Columbia. They were due to meet us for dinner that evening.

Paniotto turned out to be the spitting image of Lenin. I had a hard time hiding my amazement when Irina introduced us. Despite his stay in the US, his English was still shaky, so we talked in Russian. Given that the hotel restaurant was in party mode, with a band playing, couples dancing, and the people at the next table pressing us with sweet champagne, the getting-to-know-you session wasn't easy. Still I had a good first impression of both men and I was confident that we could establish a solid working relationship. Khmelko was a member of Demplatforma (Democratic Platform), a group that was seeking to democratize the Ukrainian Communist Party from within. Ukraine had declared sovereignty three months earlier, and both men said they were working on their

¹⁵⁷ At the time of my visit, "Kiev" not "Kyiv" was the accepted spelling.

Ukrainian language skills, though they were more comfortable speaking Russian. They were concerned about the revival of ethnic nationalism in West Ukraine, comparing it to what was happening in the Baltic States. They both listened to RL in Russian, and preferred the Russian-service content to the Ukrainian broadcasts, which Khmelko thought had too much of a “nationalistic” feel to them.

Next day at their offices we got down to business. We elected to run a trial survey with a sample of 1,000 respondents. We would use the three methods we were testing in Moscow, and introduce two others: direct mail; and questionnaire drop-off in person with mail return. The latter was the most common Soviet method. The results of the test would tell us what methods would work best for a larger survey.¹⁵⁸

This meeting was to be the beginning of a long and fruitful collaboration. Volodya Paniotto and I became good friends and met regularly at ESOMAR conferences for the next twenty years. He and Khmelko set up their own organization, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), which hit the headlines in November 2004. KIIS exit polls showed that the election runoff that elected Yanukovych over Yushchenko was riddled with fraud. This was the spark that ignited the Orange Revolution. The Kyiv International Institute of Sociology has been widely cited in the Western press for their excellent reports on Ukrainian public opinion after the Russian invasion of February 24, 2022.

Kyiv was a lovely green city with trees everywhere. I didn’t sense the down-trodden feel that had characterized Moscow, and the food shortages seemed less severe. The central farmers’ market was well supplied, though expensive. Vladimir Paniotto (who later adapted his first name to Volodymyr under the pressure of Ukrainization) gave me a walking tour of the old quarter, the churches of the Lavra (the monastery complex), and showed me a replica of the Great Gate of Kyiv in a central park. I was surprised to see so many functioning churches, but the heavy hand of the Party could still be felt. When Volodya and I went back to his office at the university at the end of the afternoon, a person who looked like a cleaning woman gave him a loud and aggressive scolding in Ukrainian. It seemed to have something to do with my presence there after hours. Volodya listened uncomplainingly to the diatribe, head bowed. I was at a loss to understand how a professor could be treated this way, but no doubt the “cleaning lady” was more than she appeared to be.

158 Memo Parta to Marsh, HIA.

RIGA: A WESTERN FEEL

There were no misadventures when I landed in Riga, and I was met at the airport by Dr. Aigars Freimanis. Freimanis was a lecturer in sociology at the University of Riga, and he also headed *Baltic Facts and Opinions*, a Canadian-backed survey research organization. Although outwardly large and serious, Aigars had a good sense of humor, and we were soon on friendly terms. I was staying at the Hotel Latvija, a modern high-rise building within walking distance of the old town. I was given a large corner room on the top floor, with an amazing view over the handsome Hanseatic city. We went for a beer, which took a little time, as the staff in the first two bars we went into brazenly ignored us, and then we withdrew to his office on the rather rundown premises of the University of Riga.

Baltic Facts and Opinions was a joint venture with a Canadian organization called *Baltic Connections*, headed by an experienced survey researcher of Latvian extraction called Valdis Liepins. Liepins was Vice-President of Canadian Facts, a leading Canadian market research company. The staff and interviewers of *Baltic Facts and Opinions* had been given a thorough Canadian training, and I felt that with them we were in good hands. They already had a survey underway: the first to use a sample based on the 1989 census. The survey included a protected-response question on RFE/RL listening at the end of the questionnaire. From what Aigars told me, things were running smoothly, and I saw no need to intervene in their operations.

Next day I took a walk round the old town of Riga. It looked more Germanic or Scandinavian than Russian. Originally a city of the Hanseatic League, it had later been colonized by Baltic Germans. It felt less Soviet and more Western than either Moscow or Kyiv. I noticed no particular food shortages. The Lutheran Cathedral, which had been turned into a concert hall under the Soviets, was now a church again, and boasted a large altarpiece donated by the Lutheran Church of Sweden.

In the late afternoon, I had another meeting with Aigars and some of his associates. On top of his other jobs, Aigars was the head of the Center for the Study of Public Opinion in Latvia, and he had links with the Latvian Union of Scholars and the Latvian Popular Front, an independent political organization which had been formed in 1988, and had called for independence the following year. Since it was the Latvian Popular Front which had issued my official invitation to the USSR, I wondered if I ought to thank its leader, Dainis Ivans, in person. I was wary of getting embroiled in Latvian politics, but without Ivans' invitation I

would not have got a visa. I asked Aigars if it would be appropriate for me to meet him. Aigars mulled this over, and said he'd get back to me. The next day he reported that Ivans was too busy for a personal meeting. I was relieved. Since I was on the KGB radar, the Latvians probably had no wish to engage with me either.

Since there were no direct flights from Riga to Paris, I planned to fly to Stockholm on Aeroflot, and then switch to Air France. Standing in line at Passport Control, I spotted an old acquaintance in the incoming line. It was Atis Lejins, a Latvian I had met in Stockholm, who worked as a researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. "Gene!" he said, clearly dumbstruck, but we had no time to talk. I reached into my pocket and handed him the rubles I had left. I was about to leave the USSR, and they would be more use to him than me. When Latvia became independent, Atis moved back to Riga. Eventually he was elected to the Latvian Parliament.

TRAVELER SURVEYS MOVE INTO FINAL PHASE

While we were exploring survey possibilities inside the USSR, we continued our traveler surveys outside the country. We didn't know how long it would take to obtain reliable data from in-country surveys, and it was unwise to abandon a project that had proven its value. Surveys were winding down in Finland, but expanding in Turkey and Hungary. By October 1990, we had sufficient data coming in to abandon our all-year survey format and contemplate switching to a process involving two separate surveys a year. Each of these surveys would last 3-4 months. The idea was to use this data until we were fully confident of our in-country survey work. As it turned out, in-country interviewing went faster than planned, and only one four-month survey took place, from October 1990 to January 1991.

Meanwhile our field staff, Slavko and Michael, continued to make the rounds of the European interviewing sites. SAAOR's in-person field monitoring went far beyond what was normal for a Western survey institute. Our aim was to develop a bond of trust between interviewer and supervisor. We needed the interviewers to feel that their job was important and appreciated.

Slavko summed it up as follows:

In general our survey work ... is not much different from survey work carried out by a typical Western opinion research firm. There is one aspect, however, which makes our survey research different and unique: it is the fact that we work mostly with former Soviet citizens living in the West whose attitudes

toward large organizations and work habits are different from that of the average Western interviewer. To a great extent, I believe, the success of our past visitors' surveys hinged on our ability to successfully deal with these special interviewers on a personal level... In our line of work, personal contact with interviewers is therefore essential.¹⁵⁹

The constant interaction between SAAOR and the interviewing sites was key to our success. Our work was more difficult in countries such as India or Japan where regular contacts were not possible and where cultural differences played a greater role.

Finland. KPR-Marketing had been wary of open interviewing from the start, and they withdrew from the project in the fall of 1990. KPR was one of our oldest institutes, and they had done pioneering work for us in highly sensitive conditions. Without Kari Kiuru and his colleagues, our citizen interviewing project would never have got off the ground twenty years earlier.

Turkey. Istanbul continued to show promise as a center for interviewing Soviet citizens of Turkic ethnicity. When I went to Turkey in early March, I found the pilot project with PIAR Marketing Research was proceeding well.¹⁶⁰ We were also successfully conducting in-depth interviews with ethnic Turkic visitors (mostly Azeris), who listened to RL programming in their respective languages and then discussed what they had heard with Prof. Arslan Alptekin, a former RFE/RL staffer who was now teaching in Istanbul.

Vienna. INTORA continued to turn in excellent work, but the institute was not content to rest on its laurels. In December 1990, Helmut Aigner sent us a proposition regarding interviews in the newly accessible countries of Eastern Europe,¹⁶¹ and followed this up with a visit to our offices a few weeks later.¹⁶² He proposed to conduct interviews with Soviet travelers to Hungary under the umbrella of the Fessell & GFK market research organization. Four or five Russian-speaking GFK interviewers in Budapest would be specially trained by Aigner and his team.¹⁶³

159 Memo from Martyniuk to Parta, "Field Controls: Importance of Personal Contacts," 13 November 1990, HIA.

160 Letter from Parta to Aksoy, PIAR Market Research Istanbul, 27 February 1990, HIA.

161 Letter from Aigner to Parta in German, 13 December 1990, HIA.

162 Memo from Haney to Parta/Martyniuk, "Aigner visit, Friday, 11 January 1991," 15 January 1991, HIA.

163 Letter from Aigner to Parta in German, 28 January 1991, HIA.

It seemed like an experiment worth trying. Michael went to Budapest to check out the situation on the ground. In March 1991 Aigner sent us the first 13 interviews with Soviet tourists conducted in Hungary. In general the travelers were not afraid to be interviewed, though there was a slight vestimentary problem: "Normal tourists are concerned about going into café-restaurants because they feel they are too poorly dressed."¹⁶⁴

India. The situation in India continued to be problematic. One reason for this was geography: India was simply too far away for us to monitor the interviewing as closely as we did in Europe. Another was the cultural differences between the Indian interviewers and the Soviet travelers. We had encountered the same difficulties in Japan. In April, Michael Haney spent ten days in India, trying to sort things out.¹⁶⁵ After working with interviewers from the MRAS institute for several days, he concluded that MRAS was not really up to the task of managing such a complex project in Bombay and Delhi. Another problem was that the most capable interviewers wanted to be paid more than MRAS was willing to pay.

Moving on to Calcutta, where we had recently expanded, Michael was favorably impressed with the MODE institute which was running the project there. The interviewers seemed competent, they had no trouble working openly with a direct questionnaire, and encountered no difficulties with the conflict themes. Still, it was hard to gather usable interviews.¹⁶⁶ A lot of the pilot interviews had not been completed. Irwin Hankins of Research Pacific, the oversight organization in Singapore, noted that at least one of the Calcutta interviewers had been discouraged from interviewing by elements of the Communist Party.

Michael's recommendation was to terminate the project. In his report he wrote: "Considering our rapid growth in other directions, we are in danger of spreading ourselves too thin." We cancelled the project in early 1991, and wound up relations with Research Pacific.¹⁶⁷

Greece. The port of Piraeus was not the same without Christopher Gelekli-dis. He had done excellent work for us for many years, but now he had retired and built himself a house in Marathon. The interviewers who had worked for him were transferred to an institute called KEME, which was part of the MEMRB

¹⁶⁴ Letter from Aigner to Haney in German, 12 March 1991, HIA.

¹⁶⁵ Memo from Haney to Parta, "India trip, April 5-14, 1990," 19 April 1990, HIA.

¹⁶⁶ Fax from Hankins to Martyniuk, 24 October 1990, HIA.

¹⁶⁷ Letter from Parta to Hankins, Research Pacific, 19 May 1991, HIA.



Christopher Geleklidis, Charlie Allen, and Slavko Martyniuk on Geleklidis' last visit to Paris at time of his retirement in 1990.

group headquartered in Cyprus.¹⁶⁸ KEME had worked for RFE on Bulgarian tourist interviews. Slavko oversaw the handover in late September. Geleklidis was the last of our interviewers to have known Max Ralis. It was the end of an era.

Berlin. After the fall of the Wall in November 1989, the situation in Berlin became very fluid. A lot of visitors were arriving from both Eastern Europe and the USSR. Most were traveling individually, rather than in groups, and there seemed to be considerable opportunity for expansion, especially as we could now draw on a potential interviewer pool of Russian-speaking East Berliners. Michael spent several days observing this in January 1990.¹⁶⁹

In March, Eberhard Wille, our contact at GfM Hamburg, which managed Berlin for us, retired and was replaced by Christine Rathjen. Rathjen had studied Russian language and culture, and made several visits to the USSR.¹⁷⁰ She felt Berlin had potential, but the city was too far from Hamburg for GfM to provide consistent oversight. With in-country interviewing in the USSR expanding, Berlin was dropped as an interviewing site in January 1991.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Martyniuk Memo for the Record, "Athens TDY, June 21 to 27, 1990," HIA.

¹⁶⁹ Haney, Michael. Memo for the Record, "Field Trip to Berlin, 19-23 January 1990," HIA.

¹⁷⁰ Haney E-mail to Parta, "GFM-GETAS, Mr. Wille retirement," 30 March 1990, HIA.

¹⁷¹ Letter from Haney to Rathjen, 29 January 1991, HIA.

New York. New York continued to have problems expanding the diversity of the respondent base. Despite admonitions from Slavko during a May visit, Field Research's sample leaned heavily toward highly educated people from Moscow and Leningrad.¹⁷² Their quota was lowered for the four-month survey that would run from October.¹⁷³

Eastern Europe. Rising travel costs from Israel to the interview sites in Romania, Hungary, and Poland meant that cost per interview was now higher than elsewhere, and this forced us to revise rates downward for the IMA institute. Meanwhile, SAAOR staff criticisms led us to drop two interviewers from the project.¹⁷⁴ We intended to use IMA for the first of our planned four-month surveys from October 1990 through January 1991, but given the high cost of the interviews, and the rapidly evolving situation in the USSR, we were unwilling to extend their contract in Eastern Europe after that.

END OF EMIGRANT INTERVIEWING PROJECT

At the beginning of 1990, SAAOR was under financial pressure to end emigrant interviewing and re-channel the funding into focus groups and in-country interviewing in the USSR, but we weren't prepared to end the project entirely. The emigrant data functioned as a control check on our traveler survey,¹⁷⁵ and it also provided intriguing snippets of information on Soviet life, and data for our nearly decade-long food project.

As a compromise, we halted work in Rome in early 1990, but kept the project alive in Israel in simplified form until the end of the year. We shortened the questionnaire so that more interviews could be done on a single visit to an absorption center.¹⁷⁶

When the project was finally terminated, it deprived us of the ability to track price and availability of foodstuffs in the USSR. This unique project had begun in 1981, and had recorded developing shortages and rising prices for nearly ten years. The data was stored in a computerized database which covered nearly the whole of the 1980s. Food shortages were a serious problem affecting all Soviet citizens. I had seen this for myself on my trip to the USSR. One of our focus group

172 Letter from Martyniuk to Panich, 21 May 1990, HIA.

173 Letter from Martyniuk to Panich, 24 August 1990, HIA.

174 Memo from Haney to Parta, "IMA," 26 June 1990, HIA.

175 See Chart 9 in Appendix 1 for a comparison of listenership in citizen and emigrant data.

176 Letter from Parta to Poltinikova-Shifrin, 19 April 1990, HIA.

moderators, Ned Keenan of Harvard, had recently traveled around the USSR by train, and he said the main concern of his fellow passengers was invariably food shortages. He noted that the word “*golod*” (famine) had even been mentioned. The data gathered by SAAOR was unique, and we shared it with several government agencies, including the Office of Net Assessment at the Department of Defense. But it was a SAAOR initiative from start to finish.

A second far-reaching consequence was the end of SAAOR’s Soviet Background Notes series. The SBNs were made up of short news items provided by recent emigrants that were combined into a monthly report and given wide circulation.¹⁷⁷ Many of the items in what we irreverently called the “Briefos” came from obscure regions of the USSR whose doings were rarely covered in the central press. Some of them provided useful background to programmers, others were of interest to analysts in Washington. The only other indications that Westerners had of the hardships of Soviet society was what little could be gleaned from the narrow channels of the US Moscow embassy or the Western press. With far broader sources to draw on, SAAOR was ahead of the game. The “Briefos” evoked the need for hospital patients to pay doctors and nurses for medical treatment, the obligation for teachers to give good grades to the children of the nomenklatura, the corrupt practices of Party bosses, the widespread hazing among new recruits in the Soviet Army... They drew attention to the increasing fragility of the USSR, and foreshadowed the shape of things to come.

KOL ISRAEL PAYS TRIBUTE TO SAAOR

SAAOR had worked with Kol Israel radio for a long time. I had had a cordial relationship with its director, Victor Grayevsky, since 1982, and for many years we had provided the station with survey data that the Israelis believed had increased the effectiveness of their broadcasts to the USSR, and contributed to the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. 1990 marked the fortieth anniversary of Kol Israel’s foreign broadcasting service, and I was invited to attend the ceremonies in Jerusalem, as was Peter Udell of the BBC. I was treated as an honored guest, given red-carpet treatment, and presented with a commemorative medal.

¹⁷⁷ A selected number of these background notes on life in the USSR can be found as “Eye-witness accounts from the Soviet Union” in *Social and Economic Rights in the Soviet Bloc: A Documentary Review Seventy Years After the Bolshevik Revolution*, edited by George R. Urban (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988), 221–241.



Author with Anna and Victor Grayevsky at 40th anniversary celebration of Kol Israel in 1990.

I was also allocated a car and driver to travel wherever I wanted, all expenses paid. Since I already knew the north of Israel quite well, I chose to head south to Eilat on the Red Sea. This part of Israel, the Negev desert, was very different from the lush Mediterranean region. My driver was a genial fellow and we hit it off from the start. We stopped to visit Ben Gurion's modest home in the desert. We saw a vast field of electricity-generating solar panels, and Merkava tanks on maneuvers in a cloud of dust. I took an early morning swim in the Red Sea. Then we headed north along the Jordanian border to the BIB-sponsored transmitter site which was under construction about 20 miles south of the Dead Sea. It was intended to serve both RFE/RL and VOA, and it would have greatly increased the reach of both stations into Central Asia. But work had been suspended while research was carried out to determine the impact of the site on bird migration. The project was eventually abandoned in 1993. We drove back up the Western side of the Dead Sea, reaching Jerusalem in time for the anniversary festivities.

The formal celebration was held in the ballroom of a large Jerusalem hotel. There was a banquet with a number of speeches, including one given—to my sur-

prise—by me. I had not been expecting to speak and was taken aback when Victor Grayevsky asked me to get up and say a few words. He gave me a flattering introduction, adding that SAAOR's work had been a "lifeline" for Kol Israel,¹⁷⁸ and I managed to give a short talk with enough humor to get the audience laughing.

The next day, I was among a small group invited to a personal audience with the Israeli President, Chaim Herzog. It was a memorable trip.

FOCUS GROUPS BROADEN THEIR SCOPE

By 1990, we no longer needed to use Soviet emigrants for focus groups and program reviews. In some cases, we used Soviet citizens visiting the West, and in others, we conducted groups inside the USSR. Professor Keenan, who had worked for us in the States the previous year, came to Paris to moderate groups covering RL programming on Soviet nationality issues.¹⁷⁹ IMA organized focus groups with non-Russians in Israel. Some 25,000 Soviet tourists visited Israel in 1990: 10% of them came from the Central Asian republics and the Caucasus,¹⁸⁰ and there were also many Ukrainians and Belorussians. Inside the USSR, we ran focus groups in Moscow, and also set up projects in the Baltic States. Suomen Gallup served as our liaison with the Tallinn-based institute EMOR, who held RFE/RL in high esteem and were thrilled to be working with us in Estonia. In Lithuania, the groups were organized by Baltic Ventures, a small operation based in Washington, DC, headed by Joan Adomaitis Agerholm.¹⁸¹

A MAP OF SOVIET PUBLIC OPINION

Alongside our exploration of in-country polling, we were mapping the structure of Soviet public opinion. We had begun working with the French opinion research association Agorometrie the previous year, and under their guidance had incorporated fifty "conflict themes" into our regular questionnaire.¹⁸² Conflict-theme questions were designed to provoke an opinion which would serve to

¹⁷⁸ Letter from Parta to Pell, 25 May 1990, HIA.

¹⁷⁹ Letter from Roehm to Keenan, 22 June 1990, HIA.

¹⁸⁰ Letter from IMA to Parta, 26 October 1990, HIA.

¹⁸¹ Letter from Roehm to Agerholm, 8 August 1990, HIA.

¹⁸² A useful overview of Agorometrie's methods can be found in an article by Jacques Durand, Jean-Pierre Pagès, Jean Brenot, and Marie-Hélène Barny, "Public Opinion and Conflicts: A Theory and System of Opinion Polls," in *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol.2, No.1, 1990.

situate the respondent on Agorametrie's model of the Soviet population.¹⁸³ In 1990, Agorametrie prepared a report on the findings of this research. Originally written in French, the report was translated into English for our convenience.¹⁸⁴

As noted earlier, the model proposed by Agorametrie broke down the Soviet population into four quadrants labelled Progressive, Conservative, Pragmatic, and Idealist.¹⁸⁵

Progressive stood for non-conformity, social mobility, challenges to the established order, and political pluralism. Respondents falling into the Progressive quadrant were young people aged 18–34, supporters of the reform-minded Yeltsin, and residents of Moscow, the Baltic States, and the Caucasus. They were interested in samizdat, and read innovative publications like *Moscow News* and *Novy mir*. They rarely watched state television, and they were not Party members.

Conservative represented tradition and support for the institutional order, moral censorship, and social immobility. The Conservative quadrant was linked to people over 50, workers and farmers, supporters of arch-conservative Yegor Ligachev, residents of Central Asia, and the RSFSR outside Moscow and Leningrad. They were Communist Party members, and used official sources of information such as *Pravda*, *Molodaya gvardiya*, and *Sovetskaya Rossiya*.

Agorametrie placed Progressive and Conservative at opposite ends of what they called a “society-system axis.”

A second axis linked Idealist and Pragmatic, and was dubbed the “political-economic axis.” The only respondents to fall into the Pragmatic quadrant, which favored economic reform, were entrepreneurs and former managers.

The Idealist quadrant aspired above all to political and cultural freedom, and to social equality. Protection of the environment and the reduction of military spending were also important among these Western-oriented respondents. Those falling into this quadrant were likely to be residents of Leningrad, often Jewish, and likely to express respect for the prominent dissident Andrei Sakharov.

Both Radio Liberty and BBC were placed in the Progressive quadrant, aligning with non-conformist, forward-looking elements in Soviet society. Most of the other foreign broadcasters, including VOA, were in the Idealist quadrant. Agorametrie's analysis implied that Radio Liberty could usefully appeal to listeners who held Pragmatic values and were open to new possibili-

¹⁸³ See Appendix 4 for more information on the conflict themes.

¹⁸⁴ Agorametrie International, “Media and Communication in the USSR: A joint study with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,” 1990.

¹⁸⁵ A diagram of the model is available in Appendix 3.

ties. One of the recommendations we subsequently made to programmers was to include more economic broadcasts, especially programs that would highlight entrepreneurial values.

Beyond specific programming suggestions, what was so important about the Agorametrie methodology was that it mapped out for us the entire structure of the nascent public opinion in the Soviet Union and enabled us to reach a more sophisticated understanding of what factors and perceptions influenced the mindset of the Soviet public. We could now move beyond analysis of single issues, such as, say, attitudes to the war in Afghanistan, and see how they fitted into the larger societal picture.

Agorametrie was a respected organization that commanded international recognition, and our collaboration with them certainly enhanced our prestige. We knew we had attained a whole new level when Ron Hinckley, the Director of USIA Research, asked to be given the perceptual mapping graphs that Agorametrie had developed for us.

STAFF CHANGES AND COMPUTER PROGRAMMING

Our main in-house software package for dealing with the conflict theme questions was the newly-discovered Research Machine. Richard Brooks had played a major role in acquiring this new software, but sadly he left SAAOR in January 1990 for a job that was too good to turn down from a French computer services company. Richard was a huge loss to our operation. He had done a tremendous job in raising SAAOR computing to a higher dimension, while his offbeat sense of humor had kept us consistently entertained. One of his in-house memos outlined the office Ten Commandments, and began: "I. Thou shalt not touch Gene's TV: II. Thou shalt not go back and undo the editor's changes."

In his absence, Amy Corning took over the initial testing and organizing of Research Machine for office use. It was a new role for her, and she did an excellent job. Research Machine remained our main in-house software package until 1994.

A new analyst came on board in the fall of 1990. This was Albert Motivans, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, who spoke both Russian and Latvian. He was of Latvian descent and came to us from the US Census Bureau, where he had worked as a statistician. He was well placed to handle analytical and statistical work in our area, and gave us added capabilities in handling the Baltic States. Initially Albert left his young family behind in the US and rented himself a houseboat on the Seine. He invited us over for drinks one warm autumn evening.

You saw Paris from a whole different angle sitting on the deck with a glass in your hand watching the métro trundling across the river a short distance away.

NEW METHODOLOGY FOR ESTIMATING AUDIENCES IN GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

We continued to make progress on the methodological front. Estimates of RL's audience in the non-Russian republics had historically been weak, but thanks to advances in statistical analysis, and the efforts of our interviewers throughout Western Europe, we were now able to achieve a more precise estimation.

In recent years, we had made a concerted effort to increase the non-Russian share of our survey group. Given the choice between engaging with a Russian or a member of one of the minority nationalities, interviewers were instructed systematically to choose the latter. As a result, the geographic distribution of respondents in our sample was increasingly robust.

We asked our statistical consultant, Ree Dawson of MIT, to develop an improved method of estimating audiences in the non-Russian republics. Dr. Dawson worked out a new approach using log-linear imputation techniques,¹⁸⁶ and the results were published in a SAAOR report issued in June 1990.¹⁸⁷ The study included estimates for both the period when RFE/RL was jammed and the period after jamming was lifted, that is, before and after November 1988. Figures were provided for three key categories: the core audience (urban educated listeners), the urban audience, and the overall audience. Using a respondent base of almost 10,000 respondents, the study provided more precise estimates of listening in the ten geographic regions used in SAAOR analysis,¹⁸⁸ and gave us a much better grasp of RFE/RL's audiences in national minority areas. The highest rates of listening to RFE/RL were found in Moscow and Leningrad oblasts, the Baltic States and the Caucasus. The lowest rates were in Central Asia, Siberia and the European RSFSR outside Moscow and Leningrad (see chart 12 in Appendix 1).

¹⁸⁶ Ree Dawson, *Estimates of Geographic Audiences: Imputing Sample Values for SAAOR Interview Data*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Summer-Fall 1989, unpublished report, funded by RFE/RL, Inc., REP

¹⁸⁷ R. Eugene Parta and Ree Dawson, *Revised Geographic Listening Estimates to Foreign Radio in the USSR for 1988 and 1989: Introduction of Log-Linear Imputation Techniques for Geographic Estimates*. AR 2-90, Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research, RFE/RL, Inc., June 1990, HIA.

¹⁸⁸ These were: European RSFSR (excluding Moscow and Leningrad), Moscow & oblast, Leningrad & oblast, Siberian RSFSR, Baltic SSRs, Belorussian SSR, Caucasian SSRs, Central Asian SSRs, Moldavian SSR, Ukrainian SSR.

RFE/RL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

In November 1990, our office reached a turning point. Munich management decided to merge all of the Radios' research units into an umbrella structure named the RFE/RL Research Institute. The new Institute would comprise the analytic, monitoring, and archival units of both Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, along with the audience and opinion research departments, the publications department, and the library. The new Institute would be given equal standing with the two Broadcast Divisions, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. The current director of Radio Free Europe, A. Ross Johnson, was named Director of the Institute, reporting to RFE/RL President Gene Pell.¹⁸⁹

The creation of the Institute meant that there were major changes ahead for SAAOR. We were to be merged with EEAOR, the RFE audience research unit, into a department called Media and Opinion Research (MOR), and charged with assessing the extent and nature of media usage in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and monitoring public opinion in those areas.

I was named Director of MOR, with Peter Herrmann, the Director of EEAOR, as my deputy. Although we were for the time being in different locations, the administrative changes were to take effect immediately, which meant that I now had ultimate responsibility for operations in Eastern Europe. Fortunately, I had a good working relationship with Peter, and he kept me abreast of developments. By now EEAOR had dropped its traveler surveys in Western Europe and was focusing its efforts solely inside the broadcast countries of Eastern Europe. We were aiming to effect a similar transition, and one result of the merger was that we definitively abandoned our emigrant interviewing project. EEAOR had never done emigrant interviewing, and management considered our project expendable.

It was inevitable that SAAOR would now have to leave Paris and move to Munich to take its designated place in the Research Institute. The move was scheduled for March 1, 1991. Before then we would have to come up with a new table of organization that would merge SAAOR with EEAOR, ensuring that everyone in the new department had a clearly specified role, and that SAAOR staff members who were unwilling to make the move to Munich would be replaced.

¹⁸⁹ Press Release from the Office of the President, RFE/RL, *Establishment of the RFE/RL Research Institute*, 15 November 1990, HIA.

The End of the USSR and the Post-Soviet Transition

1991–1994

v i t t o r i o s o , c a p r i c c i o s o , l a m e n t o s o

SAAOR's move from Paris to Munich and its fusion with East European Audience Research, at a time when events were piling up in the broadcast area, meant that 1991 was in many ways a year of transition. The Soviet Union lurched from one crisis to the next. The two audience research staffs had to adjust to new initials (MOR) and a new working environment. Traveler surveys were phased out. All survey research and all focus group projects would henceforward take place in-country. The countries of Eastern Europe were shifting slowly in the direction of democratic change, and Gorbachev's resignation on December 25, 1991 was the signal for the ex-Soviet republics to take the same path.

After 1991 I've discontinued the summary of events provided for the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Partly because the Soviet Union no longer existed, partly because it would be too complex to list events in the more than twenty countries now under MOR's purview, partly because the region was in such a state of turmoil that specific turning-points are hard to pinpoint. Attempts at reform by a series of young Russian prime ministers closed down old inefficient industries, wiped out savings, and left millions jobless. Institutions ceased to function, salaries went unpaid, the social safety net (such as it was) proved helpless. The economic meltdown shattered illusions, both in the West and in Russia, that freedom would solve all problems, that the rout of communism would lead to capitalism and prosperity, and that free elections would signify the advent of democracy.

MOR's focus in the early 1990s was on comprehending and analyzing the post-communist transition. Thanks to partnerships with the International Research Institute on Social Change (RISC), and the Central European Market Institute in Krakow, we developed state-of-the-art analytical tools to track the process. New methodological approaches allowed us to understand the evolution

of Radio Liberty's audiences, and suggest how RFE/RL should position itself in post-communist Russia.

The early 1990s were a period of great hope and unprecedented challenges. As a part of the new RFE/RL Research Institute, MOR acquired a higher public profile in both East and West. But while we were experimenting with methods that would trigger a breakthrough in our research, support in Washington was dwindling for institutions that were tied in the political mind to the now defunct Cold War. In 1993 our research reached new heights—and the U.S. Congress slashed RFE/RL's budget by nearly two-thirds. The Radios survived in depleted form, but the Research Institute did not. At the end of 1994, the RFE/RL Institute ceased to function, and the groundbreaking research we had been engaged in was nipped in the bud.

NEW COUNTRY, NEW TEAM

Leaving Paris in 1991 was hard. Our family had lived there for twenty years, and our two sons had grown up there. I had come to love the city and feel part of it. But life was becoming grittier, and social unrest was increasing. Strikes were on the upswing, and I was getting tired of walking several miles home at night when the Métro wasn't running. The green spaces of Munich and the proximity of the Alps held a distinct appeal.

Even more difficult was the breakup of the SAAOR team, which was an exceptional group of highly talented, competent, and committed individuals. How would we fare without Nicole, who had been at the center of our tightly-knit community? I had not been given permission to transfer her to Munich. Apparently Munich management felt there were two people in EEAOR perfectly capable of taking over her functions. In an administrative sense this was doubtless true, but as the heart of our team Nicole was irreplaceable. She was hurt by not being asked to join the move (though I doubt that she would have left Paris).

We also lost Patricia Leroy, who had been responsible for the high quality of our reports output, and was the brain behind the (still unfinished) Office Novel. She remained in Paris with her family, and concentrated her writing talents on fiction. She became a successful writer of contemporary historical fiction, with several books set in SAAOR's area of interest, and has published nine novels to date. Finding a replacement for her in Munich wasn't easy.

The original team had lost several members in the past few years, as it became gradually clearer that, with the Soviet Union on the verge of collapse, the long-

term existence of SAAOR in its current form was in doubt. Charlie Allen had left in 1989, and Richard Brooks in 1990, both headed for new careers. Charlotte Pullen had moved to the US in 1989 with her future husband, and Sallie Wise had left for Washington to take up a new post within the Radio. Elaine Ward and Constantin Galskoy left at the end of 1990. On the other hand, shortly before the move, we gained two new recruits: Albert Motivans and Susan Gigli. Susan joined us in the New Year of 1991 to assist Susan Roehm with our focus group work and in-depth interview projects. She had been working for HIAS in Rome, and her husband was an Italian. Susan was a New Yorker who had a B.A. from George Washington University and an M.A. from Columbia in Russian Studies and had worked for several years in Rome with HIAS dealing with emigrants from the USSR. She spent a few weeks in the Paris office before we all moved to Munich.

Albert Motivans worked as a statistician in the Bureau of the Census. He was of Latvian descent and spoke both Russian and Latvian. He had been educated at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and was well-positioned to handle analytical work in our area and gave us added capabilities in dealing with the Baltic states.

Positions in Munich were originally offered to Amy Corning, Susan Gigli, Michael Haney, Slavko Martyniuk, Albert Motivans, and Susan Roehm. I fought



Moving Day 1991. SAAOR joins EEAOR in Munich and the two staffs merge into MOR (Media and Opinion Research).

to have Ségolène Mykolenko included too. Given that no one in EEAOR was familiar with our Research Machine software, I considered that her presence would be essential. Ségolène's architect husband, Vladimir, took some persuading, but she finally convinced him, and he managed to find work on the new Munich airport project.

While we succeeded in putting together a competent team in Munich, the atmosphere in the Media and Opinion Research office (MOR) never resembled the *esprit de corps* of the Paris group. At the outset, merging the two staffs was a complicated task because the units had been organized in different ways. In SAAOR, everyone more or less had a hand in everything: if not in the initial stages of a project then at least with our peer review procedure of reports at the end, but in EEAOR one researcher was assigned to handle survey data from each specific area, and there was no review system. By the time we arrived in March 1991, the Polish, Bulgarian and Hungarian, researchers had moved on, but the Romanian and Czechoslovak analysts, Catherine Banush and Darya Bobek, became part of our team. Since taking over as director of EEAOR, Peter Hermann had hired two additional analysts, Michael Deis and Jill Chin, both highly qualified Ph.Ds, who were able to function in a more polyvalent way than the existing staff. His office also included a data evaluator, a field operations coordinator, and two secretaries. One of the latter, Sylvia Grossman, had previously worked at ARD with Max Ralis and George Perry.

Peter's team was somewhat older than SAAOR's, and had apparently been used to working at a fairly relaxed pace, with everyone doing their own thing in their own corner. When our younger, more dynamic group arrived, there was a certain amount of friction. Eventually we succeeded in melding the two units into one, but the undercurrent of tension between the "Muenchners" and the "Parisiens" never quite disappeared.

RFE/RL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The new RFE/RL Institute was divided into four departments: Media and Opinion Research (MOR), Analytical Research, Publications, and Information Resources (which included the samizdat archive and the library). The director of the Institute was A. Ross Johnson, who had worked for the RAND Corporation for many years, before joining RFE as Director. The Institute had over 200 employees. Its archive, nick-named the "Red Archive," included clippings from 1,500 Soviet and East European newspapers, several million subject items, an

immense biographical database, and a library of 120,000 books. It maintained the world's largest collection of samizdat writings. It was a unique resource for scholars interested in the USSR and Eastern Europe, and a place where area specialists could pursue research projects, draw on the archives, and interact with staff analysts.¹ It had been an almost obligatory port of call for Western journalists traveling to the communist bloc during the Cold War.

The role of Media and Opinion Research was to examine social and political opinions and media behavior in the countries of the broadcast area through the use of survey research. Our task was facilitated by the links we were beginning to develop with East European and Soviet researchers, not to mention our old-established ties with Western social science research. It has to be said that our relocation to Munich, coinciding as it did with the collapse of communism, was a game changer. In Paris, we had been working in something of a vacuum. In Munich we benefited from the Institute's high profile as an unrivalled source of information on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and this changed the way we worked. New opportunities came our way, exchanges with scholars in our field became more frequent, new horizons opened.

When the Institute was set up, it was thought that closer collaboration with the Analytical Research Department would increase our effectiveness. In Paris, SAAOR had had little contact with the RL Research Department, but it was clear that their analysts had a lot to offer us in the area of question development and interpretation of survey results. From our side, we could bring insights to bear on survey data published in Soviet or East European media. Unfortunately, these exchanges never panned out to the extent we had hoped. It was a period of constant upheavals in the broadcast area, and everyone was so busy with day-to-day work demands that an organic working relationship never really developed. Part of the problem was geographical. The Research Department was situated in the main Radio building in the Englischer Garten, while the MOR offices were located across town in an area known as Kustermann Park. A shuttle van (some of whose drivers were rumored to be ex-Stasi)² linked the two sites, but it was a

¹ "RFE/RL at a Glance," July 1991. This was a fact sheet developed for public relations purposes. REP

² This was confirmed by Rick Pinard, one of our staffers who spoke excellent German, who asked one of the drivers "how it that you sound like you're all from Leipzig?" The driver replied, "because we're all from there... We're mostly *Personenschutz* people from the Stasi. I don't brag about my marksmanship skills like Heinz does, but we all trained there." The drivers were not employed by RFE/RL but by a transport company named SOD GmbH.

twenty-minute ride. The physical distance between our two offices hindered a natural back-and-forth.

What did enhance our work were opportunities that came our way from other research organizations. The Soviet Union was opening up, MOR was gaining a reputation as a front-runner in the field of survey research, we were in daily contact with the Soviet Union in its latter days and the Former Soviet Union following the breakup. Because of this, we were asked to cooperate on projects by both the European Commission and the International Research Institute on Social Change (RISC).

The Eurobarometer project had been set up in 1973 to monitor public opinion and media use in the member states of the European Commission. It covered topics such as energy, climate change, health care, the economy, and foreign policy.³ In 1991, we were invited to take the lead in formulating the media section for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in a survey coordinated by Gallup International in London.

It was flattering to be asked to participate in such a project, but it was the partnership with the Research Institute on Social Change that really propelled our work into a new dimension. RISC was an international consultancy group based in Paris and Nyon (Switzerland). It specialized in monitoring socio-cultural change. It had been set up in 1978 and was active in 18 countries. Its aim was to identify, measure, and interpret the factors that made up people's attitudes, motives and habits. Most of its clients were large business organizations who were interested in the processes of societal change for strategic planning purposes. When it decided to extend its activities into the newly accessible countries of Eastern Europe, RISC approached MOR with a proposal to set up a partnership covering the RFE/RL broadcast area. This collaboration placed us on the cutting edge of research into the post-communist transition.

MOVE TO IN-COUNTRY SURVEY WORK

In the course of 1991, our work with Soviet travelers was phased out and replaced with in-country surveys and focus groups. I had wanted to maintain the traveler survey until we were absolutely sure we could trust local institutes to do competent work inside the Soviet Union, but the project had to be terminated sooner than I would have liked due to budgetary constraints.

3 European Commission, *35 Years of Eurobarometer*, Brussels, 2009.



MOR staffers Ségolène Mykolenko and Susan Roehm with Virginie Coulloudon (left), a leading French journalist on the USSR who was one of our focus group moderators in Paris and Moscow.

During my trip to the USSR in September 1990, I had greenlighted several projects, including methodological studies in Moscow and Kyiv, and our staffers made several follow-up visits to check on their progress. In 1991, the political situation in the USSR was distinctly shaky, but the country was no longer off-limits. Amy Corning went to Moscow to supervise the study I had set up with VNIKS, Michael Haney went to Ukraine to train interviewers for the study in Kyiv, and Slavko Martyniuk went to Kyiv to monitor the survey work later in the year. Michael and Amy went to Tbilisi in September to observe our early field work in Georgia. Michael went to Minsk, L'viv, and Kyiv at the end of the year.

Active supervision of work in the field was what set MOR apart from other Western survey organizations. We had carried our methods over from our successful traveler survey. Creating close working relationships with Soviet institutes led to a kind of cross-fertilization. The institutes were working hard to reach Western standards: they learned from us, and we learned from them. Understanding the conditions they were working in helped us analyze the data they had gathered. Michael Haney summed it up as follows:

In a brief trip to the field, an observer can control work, meet researchers and staffers from the contract and other institutes, get the 'lowdown' on personalities, learn more about general conditions than from weeks of studying, contact only by fax or telephone, etc. MOR's presence in the field and com-

mitment to control impress leading Western researchers, respected scholars who will speak highly of the Research Institute.⁴

Over the years, we did a lot to foster the development of independent survey research institutes in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Our staff visited the broadcast area to monitor our projects, and Soviet survey researchers visited Munich to learn more about MOR's operations. This two-way traffic enabled us to forge close ties with the organizations we were working with. Early visitors to Munich included Elena Koneva, Alexei Levinson, and Andrei Sokolov of VTsIOM in Moscow; Sergei Andreyev of the Leningrad-based Baltic and World Community; Aimar Altosaar and Kalev Petti of EKE-ARIKO in Tallinn; Paata Amonashvili and Soso Kakubava of the Georgian Sociological Research Center in Tbilisi; Rasa Alisauskiene of the Sociological Laboratory at Vilnius University; Janos Gado and Sandor Erdoesy of ECO-Mareco, Budapest; and Magda and Marek Boguszak of AISA in Prague.

MOVE TO IN-COUNTRY FOCUS GROUPS IN USSR

All our focus groups were now conducted in-country, again under the close supervision of our staff. Albert Motivans monitored groups conducted by the Sociological Laboratory of the University of Vilnius. Susan Roehm attended a second round of groups organized by VNIKS in Moscow. Susan Gigli and Catherine Banush traveled to Romania, and Peter Herrmann monitored groups in Warsaw, Krakow, and Gdansk. In Tbilisi and Yerevan, groups were conducted by AMER Research, which was based in Cyprus, and a representative of the organization came to Munich to present the results.

In countries which lacked the infrastructure to conduct focus groups, we relied on in-depth interviews. Working with the Israeli-based institute IMA, we conducted depth interviews in Kirghizstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Tatarstan, and Turkmenistan. Respondents were required to listen to RL programming in their native languages before the interview took place, and prompted to provide specific comments in the course of the discussion. Local interviewers had been recruited and trained by the director of IMA in the course of a trip to the USSR in 1990.

4 Memo from Haney to Parta, "Project Monitoring in the Field," 5 July 1991, HIA.

ORIENTATION TRIPS TO EASTERN EUROPE

As director of MOR, I was now responsible for audience research in the five Eastern European countries of the RFE broadcast area, and I visited four of the five in the course of 1991. They had all broken with communism in 1989, which gave them a head start on the republics of the USSR. I wanted to get a first-hand sense of the area and meet our research partners there, before turning over Eastern Europe to Peter Herrmann and the area specialists to deal with on a daily basis.

Poland. A survey was underway with Central European Market Research (CEM) based in Krakow. The institute was headed by Dr. Jan Jerschina, a professor of sociology at Krakow's famed Jagellonian University. Jerschina was an exceptionally competent partner and we developed a long-term working relationship. He would later collaborate on a socio-political model (PSE) that went into the field in 1994 and added an extra dimension to our analysis.

Krakow had a picturesque medieval center with a large market square. Unlike Warsaw, it had been spared major damage during the war, thanks to the local German commander who ignored an order to destroy the city before withdrawing his troops. That didn't mean it got off lightly. Its thriving Jewish community was decimated. Kasimierz, the former Jewish Quarter, is still physically intact, though I found it sadder and more run-down than the picturesque Old Town. It featured as the backdrop to the film *Schindler's List*.

Czechoslovakia. In 1991, the possible break-up of the country was a hot topic, and Michael Deis and I attended focus groups that dealt with the issue of Czech and Slovak nationalism that was threatening to tear the country apart. The groups were conducted by the research institute AISA. We came away with the feeling that, despite a definite fault-line between Czechs and Slovaks, a break-up was unlikely. Although we turned out to be entirely wrong, the findings of the study came in useful to prepare a questionnaire on the topic which went out later in the year.

The Old Town of Prague, with its winding streets and the lamp-lit Charles Bridge, was full of charm, but I had little time to sightsee. That came later, in the eleven years I had an office and an apartment there, during the period 1995–2006.

Bulgaria. The Vienna-based institute Consent was running a survey in tandem with their Bulgarian partner, and an interviewer briefing was held at a ski resort in the Rhodope mountains, in the south of the country near the Greek border. I was helicoptered to the resort with two Austrians from Consent, but our red-carpet

treatment could have ended in disaster. The helicopter was a large, aging Russian model. We boarded in bright sunshine in Sofia, flew east over flat farmland, turned sharp right to follow a river valley through the mountains, and found ourselves in thick fog. We couldn't see anything above, below, or to the side. I hoped to God the pilots knew what they were doing. We three passengers were seated in the back, separated from the pilots by a glass screen, and through the screen we could see they were having what seemed to be quite a heated argument. One of them pulled out a map, looked at it, and shook his head. It didn't look good. But then they shot the helicopter straight up in the air until we were above the fog. That was when we saw that there were mountains, alarmingly close, on both sides!

We landed at the resort without further incident. The interviewer briefings took place in Bulgarian, and appeared to be well conducted. My knowledge of Russian enabled me to catch the drift of the discussions, but I couldn't follow them closely. The resort looked more modern than I had expected. It had probably served the Bulgarian nomenklatura during the communist period. There was no time to look round, because the pilots were worried about weather conditions and we left again almost at once. During the flight back to Sofia we stayed at a high altitude and everything went smoothly.

Sofia was pretty down-at-heel, with a lot of graffiti-covered buildings. I had a meeting with the directors of the First and Second Bulgarian TV Channels, who briefed me on Bulgarian media. I met the managers of an institute called the Center for the Study of Democracy, and attended an interview conducted for mysterious reasons with a family during Sunday lunch at their home. The wife let us in. The husband scowled throughout. The room was overheated and smelled of cabbage, but they were willing to answer questions about RFE.

My final stop was in Varna, on the Black Sea, to observe field work. The run-down beachfront area seemed to cater mainly for East Bloc tourists and left-wing Brits on a budget, but the city center was in decent shape.

Working through Vienna had been a good way to initiate interviewing in Bulgaria, and the work being conducted was entirely satisfactory, but I thought it would be better to deal directly with a Bulgarian institute in the future. The following year we began to work with the Center for the Study of Democracy under its Director Ognian Shentov, and a company called British Balkan Surveys which had been founded by Gordon Heald of the UK Gallup organization.

Hungary. In Budapest we worked with several different companies. Survey research was carried out by Median, a local institute founded the previous year by Endre Hann, who had formerly worked in the audience research department of

Hungarian State Radio. Hann's office was located in a large house in the hilly Buda section of the city, a short taxi ride from the Hilton where I was staying. Median was to become a leading Hungarian market research institute, and is still functioning under Hann's direction thirty years later. RFE listening rates compared to local media were provided by the German market research company GfK. Focus groups had been coordinated by the MODUS agency since late 1989.

Of all the cities in the former East Bloc that I visited, Budapest was undoubtedly the most vibrant. It had a lively street life, with Parisian-style cafés on the Pest side. The Hungarians produced an excellent *foie gras* that rivalled the French product, and went well with the local Tokay wine.

"ALIEN VOICES"

During the first part of 1991, the Soviet Union was riven by political tensions. Eduard Shevardnadze had resigned as Soviet Foreign Minister the previous December, warning that dictatorship was on the way. Open conflict had erupted in the Baltic States, with fighting at the Vilnius television tower, and barricades thrown up against Interior Ministry troops in Riga. Gorbachev attempted to save the day by proposing a new Union treaty, but it was clear that the hardliners were bent on re-taking control.

Our research nearly fell victim to the hardline advance when Soviet television broadcast an attack on Radio Liberty in March 1991. The main TV channel aired a film named "Alien Voices" (чуждие голоса), produced by the KGB, and clearly labeled as such. The film was a direct onslaught on Radio Liberty, and relied heavily on input from the defector Oleg Tumanov. SAAOR was singled out for assault. Photos of me and Charlie Allen were shown, and our activities were denounced as an intelligence operation. SAAOR's questionnaire was examined on-screen, and it was emphasized that, though this might look like an innocent document, it was really designed to gather intelligence.

The film was shown nationwide on a Sunday evening, the best time to gain maximum audience exposure. I was in Warsaw when it was aired, and Michael Haney was in Kyiv, preparing to lead an interviewer training session. In his luggage was a fax machine requested by the institute who saw it as their "gateway to the world." But when the institute directors, Paniotto and Khmelko, saw "Alien Voices", they were deeply shaken. If the KGB was attacking us directly on television, was it wise to go ahead with the study? Paniotto's mother, who had lived through the Stalin era, was especially nervous. She had attended Yiddish high

school in the 1920s, during a brief period in which Yiddish culture was authorized, but as a young adult in Stalin's USSR, she dropped her Jewish identity, abandoned the Yiddish language, and spoke only Russian. She did not approve of her son fraternizing with the likes of MOR.

The group that assembled for training on Monday morning consisted mainly of graduate students at the university. Before the meeting, Paniotto and Khmelko broke it to Michael that they intended to cancel the project. But when the three of them entered the briefing room, the students stood and burst into applause. They had seen the film, and they insisted that the study go forward. They said that if the KGB was attacking SAAOR the study must be important, and they wanted to be part of it. Paniotto and Khmelko were obliged to give in. Michael conducted the training session and the study went into the field as planned. There were no repercussions. The episode made it clear that the climate of fear that had long permeated the Soviet Union still held among older people, but that the younger, educated generation who had come of age under perestroika were no longer in thrall to it.

THE AUGUST PUTSCH

The August putsch on Monday, 19 August, 1991 changed everything. Lynne and I were on a hiking vacation in the Swiss Alps when we heard the news. Gorbachev had been relieved of his duties due to "ill health," and an Emergency Committee had taken over. Tanks were appearing on the streets in Moscow. People were gathering around the Russian parliament, the White House. Just after noon, Boris Yeltsin climbed on top of a tank in front of the White House to condemn the coup. RL reporters covered the event live from inside the building.

During the three days of the putsch, Western radio, and in particular RL, was a vital source of information for the Soviet public.⁵ Iain Elliot, deputy director of the RFE/RL Research Institute, was in the crowd on the street in Moscow: "At five o'clock a familiar sound caught my attention, the news from Munich (Radio Liberty's Russian Service) emerging loud and clear from the center of a large cluster of umbrellas at the end of the bridge."⁶ Most newspapers in the capital had been shut down, and Soviet radio broadcast light entertainment interspersed with terse announcements from the Emergency Committee.

⁵ See Chart 11 in Appendix 1 for listenership to foreign radio during the attempted coup.

⁶ Iain Elliot, "Report from Moscow: An Eyewitness View of Soviet Putsch," *Shortwaves* (RFE/RL in-house publication), August/September 1991, REP

On Tuesday, August 20, disaster seemed imminent. The Emergency Committee was preparing to have the military storm the White House. Leslie Collitt of the *Financial Times* later reported:

On Tuesday night Misha Sokolov, the wiry 30-year-old correspondent of Radio Svoboda, as Radio Liberty is called in Russian, telephoned Munich with an urgent and emotional eyewitness report, from his 11th floor vantage point in the Parliament, of tanks moving on the building. 'Farewell, I'm afraid this is my last report,' he said abruptly terminating the live broadcast. But the telephone line to Munich was kept open. Mr. Sokolov later came back on the air to report that the tanks were turning back. Tens of millions of Soviet citizens, glued to their radio sets, including Soviet soldiers, heard the dramatic account.⁷

Among the listening millions, we later learned, was Gorbachev himself. When the putsch collapsed after three days and he returned from his forced detention on the Black Sea, he revealed that he had followed events in Moscow by listening to Western radio: BBC, VOA, and Radio Liberty.

Radio Liberty's coverage of the putsch legitimized the station's presence in the Soviet Union. In an interview given to RL's flagship news program *In the Country and the World* immediately after the putsch, Yeltsin had said:

During the 3-4 days of the coup, Radio Liberty was one of the very few channels through which it was possible to send information to the whole world and, most important, to the whole of Russia, because now almost every family in Russia listens to Radio Liberty—and that was very important. I think that by virtue of its work and objectivity, Radio Liberty deserves that [the Russian Government] establish direct contact and invite the management of Radio Liberty to visit.⁸

Two weeks after the putsch, Yeltsin issued a decree inviting RL to open news bureaus in Moscow and other Russian cities.⁹

7 Leslie Collitt, *Financial Times*, 22 August 1991, reprinted in *Shortwaves*, 3. This issue contains numerous articles on RFE/RL's coverage of the putsch. REP.

8 *Shortwaves*, *ibid.*, 3.

9 *Shortwaves*, *ibid.*, 2. Radio Liberty's new Moscow bureau later served as a useful in-country base for MOR.

RETURN TO MOSCOW

My second trip to Moscow took place a couple of months after the putsch, and in every respect it was different to the first. For a start, I had no visa problems. I flew Aeroflot from Budapest, which turned out to be an unexpectedly pleasant experience. The flight was smooth and the inflight service was copious. Two Central Asian gentlemen across the aisle were served brimming tumbler-sized glasses of vodka which they disposed of in short order. None of your wimpy Western mini-bottles here!

Arriving in Moscow, I got the red carpet treatment. RL had been praised for the role it played during the putsch by everyone from Yeltsin on down, and there was a lot of good will going around. The mood of the city seemed upbeat, if a trifle on edge, and even the food situation seemed to have improved.

By now we had an extensive network of contacts in Moscow, and I had meetings with VTsIOM, now headed by Prof. Yuri Levada, and VNIKS, which had carried out our methodological study the preceding fall. My other contacts included Boris Grushin at Vox Populi; Elena Bashkirova, who had established ROMIR after a career at the Institute of Sociology at the USSR Academy of Sciences; and Alexander Oslon at the Public Opinion Foundation.

Grushin gave me a tour of his offices in the MGIMO building (the prestigious Moscow State Institute for International Relations), and then invited me to his apartment in southwest Moscow. Mindful of the dire food situation of the previous year, I had picked up a two-foot long Hungarian salami at Budapest airport as a present for Boris and his wife. Natasha clutched it to her chest and on bended knee said dramatically, "Now we can make it through the winter!" But the problems I had noticed the previous year seemed to have evaporated, and the Grushins had laid on a plentiful spread for me. It was a tad embarrassing. I hoped they didn't think I was doling out charity.

AFTER THE PUTSCH: RFE/RL'S MISSION ADAPTS

Shortly before the putsch, in June 1991, BIB Chairman Malcolm S. Forbes had laid out what were at that time deemed to be the goals of RFE/RL.¹⁰ The mission of the Radios was to provide the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union with an alternative, factual view of their own societies, their neigh-

¹⁰ "RFE/RL at a Glance", 1.

bors, and the world at large; to encourage democratic values; provide a model of Western journalistic ethics; and foster a sense of common purpose among the nations of the region, while connecting them to the mainstream of Western civilization. Forbes noted that RFE/RL remained the primary American catalyst for democratic change in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. His statement reflected the role of the Radios in the Cold War period.

The putsch changed everything. A few months later, the BIB Annual Report for 1992 tweaked the mission statement to reflect the new situation. Everything was subtly different. RFE/RL was charged with contributing to social stability, amplifying the evolution of democracy, and compensating for the weakness of local media. The broadcasts were to provide an impartial mirror of Soviet and East European societies; explain Western democracy; link Western and Eastern Europe; promote interethnic and regional harmony; and stimulate the development of independent, professional media.¹¹ The strategy of the Radios had changed. Henceforth they were to play a more active role in the post-communist transition.

AFTER THE PUTSCH: LISTENER EXPECTATIONS

So much for the station's official goals. But what did the listeners think? In this new political climate, what did they want from RFE/RL? A partial answer was provided in 1991 by the new President of Czechoslovakia, the former dissident playwright Václav Havel:

In the nascent pluralism of our information media, [RFE/RL] continues to occupy an irreplaceable position. We are often too absorbed in our own problems, and lack sufficient detachment for an objective evaluation of events. We need your professionalism and your ability to see events from a broad perspective.¹²

Havel's analysis was backed up by MOR's focus group research and listener feedback. Tendencies that were taking shape in 1991 continued to gather force in the following years. News was no longer the listeners' main priority. Information was now available from a variety of sources, and Western radio stations were valued less as a source of hard news than as commentators and analysts on current events.

¹¹ *Board For International Broadcasting Annual Report for 1992*, Washington, DC., 62–63.

¹² BIB, *ibid.*

This was particularly true of RFE/RL. Early Moscow focus groups made it plain that RL's Russian broadcasts generated immense credibility and trust, and were prized for their analysis. RL's geographic distance from the broadcast area gave it an advantage over local media by providing the perspective needed to analyze events without getting bogged down in local politics. Listeners in both the USSR and Eastern Europe were growing increasingly disillusioned with the lack of professionalism of their local media, and expected RL to make sense of the contradictory information they were hearing. RL's new Russian stringers were well received, but the station was cautioned not to lose its "inside-outsider" status by becoming too involved in Russian politics.

The ability to provide a Western viewpoint on events in the broadcast area was also much appreciated. Listeners were keen to find out "what the West thinks of us." Since RFE/RL was located in Europe and functioned as a non-governmental station, it was expected to cover the whole gamut of Western opinion, unlike VOA which presented the US view, or BBC which put forward the British angle. Listeners also wanted to hear programming that would educate them in the basic principles of Western life. They expressed interest in the Western approach to topics such as economics, democracy, the judiciary, social structures, health care, and religion. Listeners were remarkably honest about their lack of knowledge in these areas, and displayed an equally remarkable desire to learn about them.

Finally, the idea of RL as a stabilizing influence was plainly apparent. Local structures were breaking down and many focus group respondents said that Radio Liberty provided one of the few stable elements in their lives. They saw it as consistent and reliable, and felt that it was emotionally close to them and their concerns. In focus group discussions, it was often referred to as "ours" (*nash* in Russian), and as such it was held to a higher standard than the other Western stations.

AFTER THE PUTSCH: A CHANGE OF EMPHASIS FOR AUDIENCE RESEARCH

During the three days of the putsch, MOR had not been idle. While tanks still surrounded the White House, Michael Haney and other staffers had begun calling our survey research partners in the USSR. Our network of relations served us well, and we were able to rapidly carry out surveys of media use during the putsch in nine different areas. The polls showed high rates of Western radio listening in

all areas, with Radio Liberty in the lead throughout. A chart showing the complete findings appears as Chart 11 in Appendix 1.

As a follow-up to these spot polls, we commissioned a study of “decision makers” among the Moscow political and cultural elite. The survey was conducted by Boris Grushin’s Vox Populi. It showed that 57% of the 704 respondents interviewed had listened to foreign radio broadcasts during the coup. Radio Liberty was heard by 43% of the group, BBC by 24%, and VOA by 18%. It was clear that Western radio, and Radio Liberty in particular, had played a critical role in keeping the nation’s decision makers informed during a time of great uncertainty. The survey was so successful that we kept it going. The study of decision makers became a focus of our research in the early 1990s, and added a new and relevant dimension.

From 1970 onwards, our principal concern as an audience research unit had been to find out *how many* listeners RFE/RL was reaching. In the post-putsch period, audience size was no longer our major preoccupation. Our aim was to go from *counting* the audience to *understanding* it. The list of objectives set out by the BIB did not include obtaining the largest audience share. As a public service broadcaster, RFE/RL was values-led, not market-led like commercial broadcasters. Its performance would no longer be judged by the number of listeners it claimed to reach. What counted now was not *how many* people were listening, but *who* was listening and *how* it impacted them.

In a communist-dominated society, the role of RFE/RL had been to provide the population with alternative information to counter the one-sided news put out by local media. At most, it could hope to diminish listeners’ confidence in the totalitarian regime. But after the fall of communism, the station was empowered to play a more active role by targeting the movers and shakers in the emerging new society, and indirectly influencing what that society might become.

NEW STAFF TO MEET NEW CHALLENGES

By late 1991 it was clear that MOR was not adequately staffed to meet its new challenges. If we were to succeed in an entirely new environment, MOR had to be more than just an amalgamation of SAAOR and EEAOR. We had to construct a new unit with more, better qualified personnel, and we needed to be a lot more productive.

As a start, I decided to bring Mark Rhodes back to Europe from Washington on a part-time basis. One of the senior EEAOR staffers, David Taylor, was due to

retire on December 31, 1991, and Mark, with his invaluable experience of Washington and of the organization, was the perfect candidate to replace him as Assistant Director for quantitative studies.

The truth was that Mark's usefulness at USIA had basically run its course. The 1987 inter-agency agreement between USIA and SAAOR was updated in the fall of 1991 to reflect the new conditions in the broadcast area. The revised agreement endorsed MOR's role as sole media research provider for US-funded broadcasters. (USIA was more interested in funding opinion studies at this juncture.) "We appreciate your Soviet 'crisis studies,'" wrote Ron Hinckley, director of USIA's Office of Research, "they contribute significantly to the amazing picture of the coup that is now being painted."¹³ It was agreed that MOR would provide audience research services to VOA at no cost to USIA, and supply translations of listener feedback free of charge. VOA was granted the right to place six additional questions in each radio listening survey. MOR would conduct one annual focus group on VOA in the USSR, and one in each Eastern European country. Mark Rhodes would continue to provide ad hoc analyses of VOA data as needed.¹⁴ This meant additional (unpaid) work for us, but it was satisfying to see that USIA, and especially VOA, valued our product.

RFE/RL senior management was lukewarm about the new personnel arrangements but, with the help of Ross Johnson, we worked out a deal whereby Mark would come to Munich for three months at a stretch, and then spend three weeks in Washington liaising with USIA. His family remained in Maryland, where the children were now in school. Mark functioned as a kind of shop foreman, supervising the work of all the quantitative analysts, gently pressuring the former East European staffers to increase their output, and ensuring that the greatly expanded number of analytical reports went out on time.

That still left a couple of analyst positions to fill, and we were fortunate that our former Paris staffer Kathy Mihalisko, who had been working for the RFE/RL Institute's Analytical Research department, was anxious to rejoin us. Kathy was a valuable and resourceful addition to MOR on account of her analytical ability, her prior experience with SAAOR, her area knowledge, and her linguistic ability. Her work focused primarily on Belarus and Ukraine, and in November 1992, on a visit to Belarus, she managed to pull off an impromptu meeting

¹³ Letter from Ron Hinckley (USIA) to Parta (MOR), 23 October 1991, HIA.

¹⁴ Letter from Ron Hinckley (USIA) to Parta (MOR), 5.

with Foreign Minister Pyotr Krauchenka and Supreme Soviet Chairman Stanislau Shushkevich.¹⁵

Another important addition was Patricia Moy. Patricia had started with MOR as an intern, before being hired as a permanent researcher. She was a social science generalist, with degrees from Cornell University, but rapidly expanded her knowledge of the broadcast area and became proficient in the use of Research Machine, our main data-processing package. She was promoted to analyst within a year.

Among our other hires was Mary Cline, a graduate of Bowdoin College in Maine, who joined us as a media and opinion researcher. Mark Spina, an excellent Russian-speaker, who had met Susan Gigli while working as a case officer with HIAS in Rome, came to work on focus group projects. Rick Pinard, a graduate of Bates College in Maine, who had previously analyzed pharmaceutical questions for a German research firm, worked on projects involving Czechoslovakia. Sarah Oates, a graduate student from Emory University, who had worked with our former consultant Prof. Ellen Mickiewicz, joined MOR in an intern slot and helped analyze survey data. And finally, after several attempts, we found a capable manuscript editor in Connie Thomas, who had been working as an editor of medical reports in Basel. Connie knew Bulgarian, and later helped to analyze the Bulgarian data.

CHRISTMAS 1991

On December 25, 1991, President Mikhail Gorbachev made his last televised address to the Soviet Union. When he took power six years earlier, he had intended to reform the USSR, but had failed to do so. What happened was, as he put it himself: "The old system collapsed before a new one had time to start working." Gorbachev resigned his office as President of the USSR, declared the office extinct, and handed over its powers — including control of the nuclear launch codes — to RSFSR President Boris Yeltsin. He hadn't been told that they had been handed to Yeltsin much earlier. That evening at 7:32 p.m., the Soviet flag was lowered from the Kremlin for the last time. The Russian tricolor flag was

15 Kathleen Mihalisko, "Minsk Opens Doors for Visiting RFE/RL Research Institute Staffer," *Shortwaves*, November 1992. Kathy had been invited to a private lunch by Foreign Minister Petr Krauchenka, who had read one of her articles in the *RFE/RL Research Report*. This led to a meeting with Belarusian Supreme Soviet Chairman Stanislau Shushkevich, one of the three signatories of the CIS agreement that led to the breakup of the USSR. Both Krauchenka and Shushkevich listened to RL and were regular readers of the *RFE/RL Research Report*.

raised in its place at 11:40 pm. The end of the USSR had come, not with a bang, but with a whimper.

Radio Liberty and MOR had both played a role in bringing about the demise of the USSR, the one by serving as a counterweight to the fake news put out by the Kremlin, the other by measuring the impact of truthful information on the Soviet population. In the nearly forty years since Radio Liberty first went on the air, the broadcasts had gained in sophistication and relevance and the Radio had won itself a sizeable audience—with the help of the audience analysis provided by MOR and its predecessors.

Audience research too had traveled a long road, from the anecdotal evidence gathered in the early days of Max Ralis' ARD to the state-of-the-art computer methodology we now employed to provide audience estimates that were recognized as the industry standard for Western broadcasters to the USSR.

In the years to come, Radio Liberty would expand its broadcasting capability via the use of AM and FM relays throughout the length and breadth of Russia,¹⁶ and MOR would pursue its efforts to understand the needs and wishes of the radio audience in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. It was a considerable challenge, but we had been preparing the ground with the acquisition of new technology, and we were well equipped to meet it.

NEW RESEARCH HORIZONS

In 1991 we entered into a partnership with the Research Institute on Social Change (RISC), based in Nyon, Switzerland, that gave us the tools to analyze audiences in much greater depth than had previously been possible.

For some years, RISC had been working on a project called Anticipating Change in Europe (ACE) that was focused on Western Europe. With the fall of communism and the opening up of the countries behind the Iron Curtain, they saw the opportunity to set up a parallel project: ACE East, which would eventually make possible comparisons between West and East. Since they had no experience in the former Iron Curtain countries, they needed someone to coordinate operations there. The director of RISC, Larry Hasson, came to Munich in June 1991 to lay the groundwork for our cooperation, and from then on, we organized our survey work in close collaboration with RISC.

¹⁶ Unfortunately under Putin this network of stations re-broadcasting RL has been essentially dismantled.

The RISC methodology relied on a process of “segmentation” that divided the population of a given country into ten segments, depending on their attitudes to, and participation in, the process of social change. For an organization such as ours studying populations in the throes of major social upheaval, it was invaluable. It enabled us to dig deeper into RFE/RL’s audiences in each specific country, assess the proclivity for change in each society, determine who were the change-leaders in each country, and formulate specific recommendations to programmers.

In Poland, for instance, RFE showed high penetration in a segment denoting vitality, creativity, and risk-taking. The people in this segment were mainly under 35, highly educated, living in either Warsaw or the Baltic region, often managers or students. Since they tended to express dissatisfaction with the economic reporting and analysis provided by Polish media, our recommendations to the Polish service were self-evident.

A formal contract with RISC was signed in February 1992.¹⁷ I knew it would take several years for the project to become viable—given conditions in the broadcast area, it was unrealistic to hope for rapid results—but it was an exciting prospect!

LIVING IN HISTORY

1992 was a heady time. The Soviet Union was finally gone. The repressive apparatus of the communist state had collapsed. Territories that had been off-limits for decades were opening up. People were traveling, media were flourishing, new contacts were being made, new ways of life were being plotted out. Everything seemed possible. MOR staffers, RISC experts, and Eastern polling institutes worked together to expand the borders of our research. Conferences organized by RISC and its associates brought together institutes from Russia, Estonia, Lithuania, and Ukraine with a range of companies from around the world. At the Institute in Munich, John Klensin of MIT worked on sample design with Boris Grushin of Vox Populi. Grushin gave an on-air interview to the Russian service, as did Yuri Levada of VTsIOM. Peter Herrmann, Jill Chin, Albert Motivans, and Army Corning presented papers at international conferences. Peter and I attended meetings of ESOMAR and WAPOR (World Association of Public

¹⁷ Agreement between RFE/RL Research Institute, Media and Opinion Research, Munich, Germany and RISC SA, Nyon, Switzerland related to surveys in Central and Eastern Europe, 4 February 1992, REP

Opinion Research) in Luxembourg. Worlds that had been for so long so far apart were coming together, and MOR was at the center of it all. The boy who used to lie on the floor by his grandparents' fireplace and dream of living in history was seeing his wish come true.

The high point of the year was the conference on Eastern Europe sponsored by the RFE/RL Institute in conjunction with RISC and the *International Herald Tribune*. I was the organizing person on the RFE/RL side. In the early 1990s, it wasn't just professionals like ourselves who were eager to visit the former Soviet Union, and meet the people who counted. All of Western Europe was anxious to get acquainted with their fellows in the East. The purpose of the conference was to give inside information on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to people doing business in these areas. The title of the conference was "Inside Central and Eastern Europe: Politics, Prospects and the People." It was held in Vienna, a suitable mid-point between East and West, and chaired by Gene Pell, the president of RFE/RL, Axel Krause, the corporate editor of the *International Herald Tribune*, and Larry Hasson, the president of RISC International.

Speakers at the conference hailed from both East and West, and they came from the worlds of business, research, and policy. Jiri Dienstbier, who had until recently been Václav Havel's foreign minister, discussed the "Kafkaesque" divorce between the Czech lands and Slovakia that was due to become official on January 1, 1993. Larry Hasson outlined RISC's long-term prognosis for regional change, using data gathered by MOR. Survey researchers from Prague, Moscow, and Krakow described conditions on the ground. The deputy editor of *Moscow News*, the Finnish Foreign Minister, and a Hungarian economist addressed political, economic, and security issues. At the evening gala dinner at the Hotel Sacher, the actor and humorist Sir Peter Ustinov neatly summed up the conference over a feast of Wiener Schnitzel and Sachertorte (what else?). Ustinov had followed events in Russia and Eastern Europe for many decades, and he gave a lively address that veered effortlessly between the thought-provoking and the hilarious, switching from subject to subject and from language to language in a way that truly embodied the spirit of the conference.

EAST EUROPEAN BROADCASTERS MEET IN ISRAEL

Another unprecedented international conclave had taken place a few months earlier, when Kol Israel invited broadcasters from Eastern Europe, the US, and the UK to convene in Jerusalem. The director of Kol Israel was now Shmuel Ben-

Zvi, since my old friend Victor Grayevsky had retired, though he was still Ombudsman to the station.

When Lynne and I arrived in Jerusalem in February 1992, the city was inches deep in snow. We were staying in a hotel that had every modern convenience, with the exception of heating. Undaunted, we tramped through the snow in the Old City. Two of the Russians passed round a bottle of vodka. The conference was an excellent opportunity to meet radio people from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Now that RFE/RL was no longer an adversary, it was possible to develop good working relations, and they were even prepared to acknowledge that we had played a constructive role during the Cold War years.

We had the chance to meet various Israeli notables, including Natan Sharan-sky, the former Soviet dissident who was now a member of the Knesset, and Simcha Dinitz, chairman of the Jewish Agency, which oversaw immigration to Israel. At a gathering in a Jerusalem restaurant, I was lucky enough to be seated next to the Mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek. We even had a meeting with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.¹⁸ This took place in the Knesset. After an extremely thorough security check, we were seated around a rectangular table in a conference room. The Prime Minister was not particularly well-informed about RFE/RL, but he showed a lot of interest in the station, and asked me a number of specific questions about our future and funding. I emphasized the role played by RFE/RL, Kol Israel, and other broadcasters during the putsch, and made a point of mentioning the audience research support that we had given to Kol Israel over the years.

RADIO LIBERTY AND THE NEW RUSSIAN MEDIA SCENE

RFE/RL wasted no time in setting up its first bureau in Moscow. The office was located on Ulitsa Medvedeva in the center of the city, and later expanded into larger premises in a nearby building. After years of withstanding ferocious attacks by the regime, it was slightly surreal to see RL reporters making phone calls all over Russia from a well-equipped modern press bureau in Moscow.

In 1992, the media scene in what was now the former Soviet Union (FSU) was undergoing a sea change. New independent radio and TV stations were shooting up all over the map. Western broadcasters were no longer the sole source

¹⁸ Memo from Parta to Pell, "Meeting with Prime Minister Shamir at Kol Israel Conference," 9 February 1991 (sic). The date should have been 1992.

of free information, and they had to find ways to adapt to local competition. The new private radio stations, international satellite television broadcasters, newspapers, and even the formerly hidebound state media were all attempting to carve out an audience share for themselves and demonstrate their relevance in the new Russia. It was obvious that the high audience figures Western radio had reached in the late 1980s, when there was little or no direct competition from domestic media, could not be sustained under post-Cold War conditions, with former listeners drawn away by the new media.

One way for the stations to survive was to move away from shortwave transmissions with limited reach and declining audiences by entering into partnerships with local radio stations who would re-broadcast their programs on AM and FM. One of the arrangements RL worked out was for broadcasts to be carried on a spin-off of Radio Moscow International called Open Radio in Russia. Again, it was slightly surreal.

In areas where RL was being re-broadcast on local stations, MOR used media market surveys to complement our overall surveys of European Russia, and give us a better feel for RL listening rates in cities such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Voronezh, Nizhny-Novgorod, Ekaterinburg, and Samara. We concentrated most of our efforts on European Russia, which was easier to manage, and where the majority of the population lived, although we also took part in a Siberian survey conducted by the Academy of Sciences. All the research we conducted demonstrated that RL was the only foreign broadcaster that could stack up against domestic competition.

Data from four surveys conducted by independent contractors (MOR and others) in European Russia in the fall of 1992 indicated that 4–6% of the adult population listened to Radio Liberty at least once a week. This meant that we had a weekly audience of 4.4 million to 6.6 million listeners in the European RSFSR.

NEW SURVEY RESEARCH METHODS IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

After some hesitation, we had decided that the best way to conduct in-country surveys was in the traditional face-to-face manner. Trials in Moscow and Kyiv in 1991 had shown that self-completed questionnaires that had to be filled in and mailed back by respondents did not get a high enough return rate, and it was clear that the “protected response” approach we had devised with the coin-toss would be too complicated for a large survey. We still had doubts about the response bias issue—would Russian interviewees be prepared to admit to a Russian interviewer

that they listened to Radio Liberty?—but opted to go ahead with a traditional survey and present the results with caveats if we thought it was necessary.

Working in-country, our practices changed completely from the years of the traveler survey. We conducted a single national survey per year throughout the RFE/RL broadcast area, which was fielded in the spring. The spring survey was an ambitious project which included demographic questions, media questions, RISC socio-cultural questions, and Agorametrie public opinion questions. It was conducted in a limited number of countries and involved around 2,000 respondents in each. Some of the questions were asked directly by the interviewer, but the RISC questions were self-administered in the presence of the interviewer, who could assist with any questions that might arise.

In 1992, the survey was conducted in eight countries: Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Although it was successfully completed, it became evident that the questionnaire was far too long. Respondents tended to succumb to burnout. This taught us a lesson and in future surveys we cut down the number of questions, reducing the Agorametrie questions in particular to a baseline that provided most of the information we required.

Surveys conducted in the FSU in the immediate post-Soviet period eventually validated the findings of SAAOR traveler surveys on rates of listening to Western broadcasters.¹⁹ The number of respondents who claimed they had listened to Western radio during the Soviet period corresponded to the estimates derived from the traveler surveys, and in some cases were even higher. This was ample justification for the efforts made, and the expense incurred, to demonstrate the impact of Western broadcasting in what was then the USSR through the traveler surveys.

EXPANDED USE OF FOCUS GROUPS

We continued our practice of using focus groups and in-depth interviewing to complement the survey data. They were particularly valuable in the more remote regions of the FSU, such as Central Asia, which were not included in the RISC-inspired spring surveys.

Since 1986, all RFE/RL broadcast services had been subjected to a rigorous annual program review. SAAOR had played a key role in these reviews by provid-

19 See Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, Appendix C, 83–93, for a discussion of data validity of the traveler interviewing project. See also Chart 4 in Appendix I.

ing audience estimates for each country, along with the results of either focus groups or depth interview studies, but with the opening-up of the broadcast area we were able to go deep by soliciting comments from RL's habitual listeners in-country.

By 1992, we were able to provide responses to specific Russian-language programming. In 1993–94, we commissioned focus group studies on six Russian Service cultural programs, we tested a morning show called *Liberty Live*, we held groups among Russian youth, and we organized groups in Russian provincial cities to avoid the dangers of a Moscow-centric appraisal.

In some of the new independent republics where it was difficult to assemble focus groups (Central Asia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), we set up in-depth interviews with respondents who had listened to RL programming and were invited to review it. In Georgia we were able to set up focus groups, and Susan Roehm went to Tbilisi to observe them. In Ukraine and Poland we found that in-depth interviews organized by local institutes were a useful complement to focus groups.

Generally the interviews went off without a hitch, though our interviewers were once or twice affected by the turmoil of the post-Soviet climate. In Tajikistan, during the civil war, an interviewer's car was shot at on the way to Dushanbe airport. The interviewer, though unscathed, was badly shaken. In Azerbaijan, an interviewer was challenged at a railway station by Popular Front activists, who snatched her briefcase and emptied it out on the snow-covered platform, leaving her scrabbling round in the snow to gather up the questionnaires.

Susan Roehm remained our main focus group coordinator until 1993, when she moved to the President's office to serve as executive assistant to RFE/RL President Gene Pell. Susan's role was taken over by her deputy Susan Gigli, assisted by our manuscript editor, Connie Thomas.

MOSCOW 1992

By now I was making regular visits to Moscow. The newly-opened RFE/RL office had arranged for me to borrow an apartment on Ulitsa Myaskovskovo near the Pushkin Museum from a woman who worked for the Bolshoi Ballet. She gave me the run of her apartment during my stays in Moscow, and her excellent library gave me a feel for what it might be like to be a member of the Moscow cultural intelligentsia.

On the streets, it was a different story, as people on fixed incomes were decimated by the inflation that resulted from misguided policies of economic shock therapy. It was a shock to see elderly women selling off their few sad possessions

laid out on blankets on the streets. There was a general sense of impoverishment. Petty crime was thriving. When Andrei Sokolov, the director of RISC Russia, invited me to dinner at the Aragvi (the Georgian restaurant that had been the height of fine dining in Soviet Moscow), he removed the radio from his car and locked it in the trunk. His previous car radio had been stolen.

Radio Moscow International invited me to call. The head of the audience research department was a middle-aged lady called Valentina Zlobina, who had upswept hair and a rather nervous manner at the outset. Our meeting started off in businesslike fashion. The office was Soviet style, like Zlobina's hairdo. Zlobina was polite but not especially friendly at first. She was accompanied by an assistant, Sonya Bereshkova, a graduate student in the journalism faculty of Moscow State University, who was writing a doctoral thesis on Radio Liberty. I described our work in general terms, explained what we were doing in Russia, offered to share some information with them, and then proposed including them in our surveys of Eastern Europe. That broke the ice. They were excited by the offer, and the atmosphere warmed considerably.

Eventually our relations became quite collegial. The connection was useful to us, and we continued on good terms until my retirement several years later. I sponsored their membership in CIBAR, the organization that brought together all the Western audience research units, and invited them to the conference that was to be held in Lisbon in the fall of 1992. It was ironic that I should be the one to sponsor our old adversary, but it was very much in the spirit of the times. Michael Haney got a fax from them, and let me know that,

they were tickled pink to get such a quick response from us and grateful for the offer to include Radio Moscow International in our Eastern European surveys... They seem to have taken the contact with us pretty seriously, and wanted to point that out. Zlobina apologized for not responding earlier, saying that they wanted to discuss some questions with the General Director of the Radio who was out of town.²⁰

At a later meeting in November 1992, Zlobina remarked: "It is nice to work together as colleagues and not as opponents (*koll'egi i ni protivniki*"). I heartily agreed.²¹

20 Fax from Haney to Parta, "Radio Moscow International reply," 25 August 1992, REP.

21 Gene Parta, Memo for the Record, "Moscow TDY, 11-18 November 1992," 18 November 1992, REP.

We were continuing to develop our contacts with Moscow-based research institutions, and during that same November visit I had a lengthy meeting with Vsevolod Vilchek of the Sociological Service of Ostankino Radio and TV, the state-sponsored media organization.²² Vilchek had been on the barricades during the attempted putsch in August 1991. Although he hoped for the best for Russia, he feared the worst. In the Mood of the Nation survey his service had conducted a year earlier, responses to the opinion questions had most often invoked the word “hope” (*nadezhda*), but now it was the words “unrest” (*trevoga*), “fear” (*strakh*), and “exhaustion” (*ustalost*) that recurred most frequently. Vilchek claimed to be an optimist by nature, but admitted he was pessimistic about the current situation in Russia. He felt there was “no way out” (*vykhod nyet*). Our meeting went on for six and a half hours, sustained by a bottle of Armenian brandy and a box of cookies. We were participating in Ostankino’s diary project where panel participants logged their daily radio listening. This project had shown a relatively high rate of listening to Radio Liberty in Moscow (11%). Vilchek was somewhat suspicious of this figure, but subsequent work bore it out. Walking back to the hotel through the dark streets of the Arbat district, I reflected on his gloomy prognosis. No one else had spoken this way about Russia’s future. Like Vilchek I wanted to hope, but I couldn’t help thinking that he might be right.

In May 1993, we arranged for Sonya Bereshkova to come to the RFE/RL Research Institute in Munich to work on her dissertation. It gave her the chance to ask the questions she had been reluctant to voice in front of her superior the previous year. Getting direct access to RL’s Russian-service broadcasters added a new dimension to her work.

We took advantage of Bereshkova’s presence to contract a study of the availability of radio receivers in Russia. It transpired from this that, while almost every Russian home had a fixed radio outlet which could receive only Russian state broadcasters on three available channels (*radiotochka*), only about 43% of families had normal radio receivers, and only about half of these could receive shortwave broadcasts.²³ It justified RFE/RL’s strategy of lining up as many local AM and FM broadcasters as possible for re-transmission purposes.

22 Parta, Moscow TDY 1992, REP.

23 Sonya Bereshkova, “Radio Receivers in Russia,” MOR 1169/93, 1993, REP.

TRAVELS DOWN THE SILK ROAD

Certain parts of the FSU were hard to reach by either traditional survey methods or by focus groups. One of them was Central Asia. I flew from Moscow to Almaty in September 1992 to explore research possibilities in Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.²⁴ The RFE/RL Moscow bureau had arranged hotels and set up appointments in Almaty, Bishkek, and Tashkent.

Almaty. I arrived at the Almaty airport in the early evening. Sabit Zhusupov, the director of the Kazak Republican Center for the Study of Public Opinion, was supposed to be picking me up. Jim Critchlow had met him on an earlier trip there, and had recommended him as “probably the best game in town.” No one fitted his description, and no one had a sign with my name on it. Assuming he was late, I hung around the airport until it began to empty around 11 pm, and then called Dr. Marat Tazhin, chair of the Department of Political Science and Sociology at Almaty State University. I woke him up. He thought I was coming the following day. He told me Zhusupov was in the countryside at some family gathering. Not a great start to my trip. Fortunately I had struck up a conversation in the airport with a German businessman who had flown in from Ekaterinburg. A car was coming to pick him up, and he was happy to give me a ride to my hotel.

When we arrived at the reputed Hotel Dostyk, the desk clerk said they had no record of the reservation, which had been made by the Radios’ Moscow bureau. I was beginning to get a strong sense of *déjà vu*. It reminded me of the mix-up at the Hotel National on my first trip to Moscow. At my insistence, the clerk checked around, and discovered that I was to be lodged in a special annex that had once been reserved for Communist Party VIPs. My new German acquaintance offered the services of his driver to take me there. The annex was located in the grounds of the main hotel, but we had to drive around the block in order to get there. The lady in charge said she had been waiting for me for hours. What had held me up?

My meetings with Kazak officialdom turned out to be much more amicable than I had anticipated. I never got to meet Zhusupov, but I had an interesting session with Prof. Marat Tazhin, who was also deputy director of the Analytical Department of President Nazarbayev’s apparatus. He seemed to regard RFE/RL

²⁴ After the republics became independent, Alma-Ata became Almaty and Kazakhstan became Kazakstan. Kirghizia became Kyrgyzstan, and the name of its capital, Frunze, was changed to Bishkek, a variation on its pre-Soviet form, Pishpek.

in a positive light and proposed that the Institute and the University do a joint conference on the subject of “authoritarianism.” I agreed that it would be good to work together in some fashion, though I had doubts about his choice of topic. Authoritarianism, it was already clear, was the direction in which Nazarbayev was heading—but RFE/RL was in the business of promoting democracy!²⁵

Tazhin arranged a meeting with Valery Zhandauletov, the Press Service Consultant to the President. It was held in the massive Soviet-style building that housed the Presidency. Zhandauletov had good things to say about RFE/RL. My next stop was at the State Radio and TV Company, where I passed out some RFE/RL coffee mugs, and everyone was delighted. (Later they sent a delegation to Munich with the aim of persuading RFE/RL to lease transmitter sites in Kazakhstan. They presented me with a Kazak-themed wooden chess set, which I still have.)

Almaty was a pleasant city with tree-lined streets. It had been a major halt on the legendary Silk Road. Three of the young researchers from the institute we were working with, the Republican Center for the Study of Public Opinion, showed me around the city and introduced me to koumiss, which was fermented mare’s milk. I managed to get it down amidst their peals of laughter. The meetings with the institute were both pleasant and informative, but it became clear that the survey infrastructure in the more far-flung parts of Kazakhstan would not deliver quality data. Studies would have to be limited to urban areas for the foreseeable future.

Bishkek. I took the bus from Almaty to Bishkek so I could see something of the landscape. The institute booked me the two right-hand seats in the front of the bus so I would have plenty of space and good views. The bus was a Hungarian-built Ikarus with a large vertical crack in the windshield. The driver seemed to be Russian. His radio dangled from the rear-view mirror, and stayed tuned to Radio Mayak, a popular music station, for the entire trip. From time to time he took a drink from the spout of his tea kettle. The low point of the trip was when the bus stopped for the travelers to relieve themselves. The stench in the toilets was so bad that I opted for the outdoors.

In Bishkek, the director of the Kyrgyz Republican Center for the Study of Public Opinion sent someone to meet me at the bus station and take me to my

25 In fact, the RFE/RL Research Institute had organized an international conference in Kazakhstan in April 1992, a few months earlier. The conference was co-sponsored by the Kazak government, the Kazakhstan Academy of Sciences, and Kazak State Television and Radio. The conference brought together specialists from East and West “to discuss the growing international role of Kazakhstan and recent internal developments.” See *Shortwaves*, May 1992.

hotel. I was to stay at the Pishpek, the name of Bishkek in pre-Soviet times. I encountered the director of the Center, Dr. Adash Toktosunova, later in the day. We met in her apartment, and then went for a walk in the nearby park and sat on a bench. Toktosunova was broadly favorable to RFE/RL and democratic ideas, but she bemoaned the cultural changes that were already setting in, complaining about what she saw as immorality and shabby popular culture. She was chairman of a UNESCO committee for Kyrgyzstan. She had been in discussions with USIA research, and we talked about the possibilities of future survey work, but nothing was commissioned at this point. As in Kazakhstan, I had the impression that the interviewing infrastructure was very much in its infancy. We later worked out an arrangement to undertake some survey work with Vladislav Pototski, who was affiliated with the Center for the Study of Public Opinion and then formed his own firm, the Sociological and Market Research Firm INFOREX. Pototski had come to Bishkek from the Ukraine and later visited our offices in Munich.

My next meeting was with a young philologist named Zhenzhesbek Sydykov, who was a member of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences. My introduction to him had come from Kari Kiuru in Helsinki, who had traveled a lot in the USSR in Soviet times. Sydykov took me to meet his boss, Ilgiz Aitmatov, the director of the Academy of Sciences. Aitmatov was the brother of the well-known Soviet author Chingiz Aitmatov. We talked in Russian for about half an hour. He had a high opinion of Radio Liberty, to which he listened in Russian. He expressed concern about the Islamist movements that were beginning to spring up in the FSU, which he believed could pose a serious threat to Kyrgyzstan in the future.

Later Sydykov took me home for dinner. It was a memorable evening. First, one of his colleagues from the Academy of Sciences gave a fifteen-minute recital from the Kyrgyz national epic poem, of which I did not understand one word, though I was caught up by the rhythm. Then his son appeared with a guitar and entertained us with half a dozen Beatles tunes, sung in English. Then came my initiation into Kyrgyz cuisine. A black sheep's head was placed in the center of the table and we were all invited to cut off a piece of it, and make some kind of toast (in Russian) such as, "With this ear I hope to hear the wise words you have to share with us." I was urged to take an eye. No doubt they knew exactly what they were doing. I said something like, "With this eye I hope to enjoy the beauties of Kyrgyzstan." Then I tried to schluck it down. It wouldn't go. I made the mistake of trying to chew it. It wouldn't move. I began to gag. I really feared I was going to spit it out on the table. Fortunately we were drinking vodka out of small



Dinner in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 1992. I'm still smiling as I didn't know that I was getting the lamb's eye to eat

bowls, Asian-style. Sydykov passed me a bowl of vodka, I gulped it down, and the eye went with it. Next we had to cut off and eat other parts of the head, and then scoop out the brains with a spoon. After the near-death experience with the eye, it wasn't too much of a problem. Finally the ordeal was over, the roast lamb was served, and I could relax for the rest of the evening.

Tashkent. After a dinner of gelatinous eye, I felt equal to anything that Central Asia could throw at me. Just as well. I flew Aeroflot to Tashkent, on an old Antonov plane. In the main cabin was an open pen enclosed by wire where we could put our bags, and also our live chickens. I was being met by the director of Tashkent's official Institute for the Study of Public Opinion, and some of his young colleagues. I got on the wrong bus in the airport, and it took them half an hour to find me. They bore me off to the director's home for an excellent dinner of plov (Uzbek pilaf), and we discussed research possibilities. They tried to be encouraging about survey research in Uzbekistan, but yet again it was clear that the necessary infrastructure barely existed outside urban areas.

The next day I met with Alisher Ilkhamov, head of the Institute for Social Research, a private group which had a loose relationship with the University of Tashkent. Our discussions were more promising, I felt that we could do at least some business with him, and we did in fact later commission a survey. That eve-

ning I dined at his home. When I was invited to dinner in Central Asia, the social etiquette was always the same. The wife stayed in the kitchen doing the cooking, and only the men ate at table. I was briefly introduced to Alisher's wife, but in Bishkek Sydykov's wife had stayed out of sight.

Igor Pogrebov, a colleague of Alisher's, took me to visit the sights. Tashkent had been heavily damaged by an earthquake in 1966, and much of the city had been destroyed. Despite the damage, Tashkent felt more exotic than either Almaty or Bishkek, which were fairly Soviet in appearance. The covered market was huge, and I wandered through aisle after aisle of alluring produce. Food seemed to be plentiful. I noticed a policeman with a small machine carefully checking paper currency, especially American twenty-dollar bills. Apparently counterfeiting was a problem.

But at passport control at the airport, there were no machines. Acting on the advice of the person ahead of me in line, I put a bill in my passport. He said that was the way to get one's passport processed in Uzbekistan. It seemed to work. On the flight back to Moscow, I concluded that no major surveys would be feasible in Central Asia in the near future, and that any work we did would have to be restricted to major urban areas.

DECISION-MAKERS SHOW SUPPORT FOR RADIO LIBERTY

In a time of political transition, it was useful to know how decision-makers were reacting to ongoing events, and how they were using media. Our first decision-maker survey, conducted in September 1991 by Vox Populi in Moscow, had been so successful that we had continued to commission quarterly surveys.

Originally the interviews were conducted by phone, but we switched to an in-person format in 1993, as the questionnaire was stretched to include opinion questions. The interviews were scheduled by telephone and conducted by an interviewer at the respondent's office or home. All the respondents were residents of Moscow, and most of them were Russian.

In January-February 1993, we conducted in-person interviews with 400 respondents, selecting 50 from each of the following groups: People's Deputies; Executive Branch; political parties; state enterprise directors; private entrepreneurs; high military command; media figures; and scientific and cultural figures.²⁶

²⁶ Memo by Parta summarizing main points of Vox Populi Elite Technical Report, January-February 1993, REP.

Respondents were asked about their Russian-language media use in the preceding three months. Radio Liberty emerged as the preferred Western broadcaster. Previous studies had shown around 20% of the sample listening to RL, 10% to BBC, and 5% to VOA and Deutsche Welle. In this study, however, figures were higher across the board, perhaps due to the switch from a brief telephone conversation to a more detailed face-to-face interview. Radio Liberty came in at 31%, BBC at 24%, VOA at 16%, and Deutsche Welle at 10%.²⁷

The majority of those interviewed utilized both print and electronic media to stay informed. The survey showed considerable variation in listening habits among different types of decision makers. Journalists and political party leaders used foreign radio broadcasts, especially those of RL, as a basic source of objective information and for analysis of domestic political events. Listenership among other groups was significantly lower. More than three-quarters of the intelligentsia and political party leaders interviewed had listened to Western broadcasts during the previous three months, compared to only a quarter of military leaders, and a third of those in government executive positions. (Despite the lower rating, it was useful to know that Western radio had an audience among these groups.)

In 1994 we compared a survey of decision-makers to a survey of the general Russian population, applying the RISC methodology.²⁸ The general survey was carried out in the spring of that year, and the decision maker survey in the fall. Both the general population and the decision-makers displayed a mixture of openness to change and the desire to maintain the status quo. Neither was sure whether the country was going in the right direction.

What was interesting was the finding that the decision-makers tended to be more traditionalist than the general population. They wanted stability and a strong value system to replace the void left by the collapse of communist ideology. They were also unenthusiastic about the move to a market economy.²⁹

Given that they were generally older than the general population surveyed, this was perhaps not surprising. They had lived through, and in some cases par-

²⁷ Mark Rhodes, MOR Research Memorandum 1135/93, REP.

²⁸ Genevieve Turquier, Delphine Martelli (RISC), and R.Eugene Parta (RFE/RL-MOR), *A Social and Political Analysis of Cultural and East European Elites: A Joint Study of the Media and Opinion Research Department of the RFE/RL Research Institute and RISC International*. "1994 Elite and Comparative General Population Data in 12 Countries," RISC International, 1995. The twelve countries included the ten habitually surveyed plus Romania and Bulgaria, REP.

²⁹ RISC, *ibid.*, p.3.

ticipated in, the institutional structures of the USSR. But it did not bode well for the future development of Russia.

RISC PROJECT BEGINS TO SHOW RESULTS

The RISC methodology had begun to bear fruit the previous year.³⁰ In 1993, spring surveys had been conducted in ten countries: the original eight, plus Belarus. (Since January 1993, Czechoslovakia was two separate nations.) The new questionnaire was still long, but more manageable. We monitored the work in the field and found that all the institutes were performing well. In the previous year's survey, data on radio listening had been inconsistent, due to the different sampling methods and uneven interviewing infrastructures that prevailed from country to country, and from one institute to another. But by 1993, the situation on the ground had improved, the institutes were more experienced, and the survey results showed more consistency. We now had a database of 20,000 interviews conducted since 1991.

In March 1993, we were able to publish the first RFE/RL Audience Handbook, which provided information for the entire broadcast area on a country-by-country basis.³¹ The Handbooks were subsequently updated every six months.

YELTSIN STORMS THE RUSSIAN "WHITE HOUSE"

In the course of 1993, the political situation in Russia became more and more unstable. In order to move ahead with his reform program, Yeltsin took to issuing decrees that by-passed the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet. The parliament resisted. On October 4, 1993, Yeltsin gave the order to storm the Russian "White House," the primary seat of the Russian government. It was a dramatic moment, covered live by CNN.³²

MOR immediately commissioned VTsIOM to conduct a survey in Moscow to gauge listening to RL during the crisis. A survey was carried out face-to-face on October 4 and 5. The question posed was, "Have you listened to any of the following stations in the last two days (during the fighting)?" and responses showed that RL had by far the highest listenership of any foreign broadcaster with 16% of the

³⁰ Letter from Parta to Hasson, 3 December 1993, REP.

³¹ "RFE/RL Audience Handbook," MOR Report 1112/93, March 1993, REP.

³² For a useful summary of the siege by a former US Ambassador to the USSR, see Jack Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire* (Random House, 1995), 684–686.

sample. It was rated fourth among all Moscow radio stations.³³ A follow-up telephone survey a week later showed a similar rating, with RL at 17%. RL's reporting was singled out for its objectivity, and its coverage of the events was highly rated in both surveys (70% and 72% respectively). As in previous crises, RL stood out from the other international broadcasters to the USSR. With its in-country bureaus and an extensive network of journalist stringers it was no longer just a "foreign" station but an established part of the domestic Russian media scene.

SOCIETAL CHANGE AND WESTERN RADIO LISTENING

But, in this time of political and social upheaval, who exactly was listening to Radio Liberty? What were their socio-demographic attributes? What role did they play in society? What media did they consume? What were their needs and interests? How were they reacting to the changes that had been thrust upon them?

In Eastern Europe and the FSU, everything was broken. Particularly in Russia. All of the foundations of society had collapsed: the economy no longer functioned, the institutional structures which held the country together had disintegrated, the Soviet empire had dissolved into fifteen different countries, some of which had never before been independent nations. Russia had moved overnight from a feared and respected superpower to a second-rate country: the Upper Volta with rockets, as a Cold War joke had it. The communist ideology that had ruled the country for seventy years had been replaced by a void.

In 1994, in an attempt to find out how people were reacting, we applied the RISC segmentation model to the population of European Russia.³⁴ (Similar studies were also done for Estonia and Poland.) The model did all that we had hoped for. It brought to light findings that would otherwise have escaped us.

The findings showed that, in general, foreign radio audiences were most heavily concentrated among those who were leading the process of change in Russian society, including private entrepreneurs and Western-oriented young people,

33 R. Eugene Parta, *RL's Role During Russian Crisis Confirmed in Follow-up Moscow Survey*. MOR Research Memorandum 1203/93, Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research, RFE/RL, Inc., October 1993, REP.

34 R. Eugene Parta and Amy Corning, "A Segmentation Analysis of Radio Liberty's Audience in Russia: An Introductory Analysis Based on 1993 Data," MOR Report 1282/94, Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research, RFE/RL, Inc., September 1994, REP.

whereas listening was less widespread among what the model labeled “change-oriented conservatives”—people who favored a go-slow approach to reform.

What was interesting was that Radio Liberty’s audience profile showed some curious deviations from the overall pattern. While even more heavily concentrated among the change-leaders in society, it was less sought out by private entrepreneurs and Western-oriented youth. On the other hand, it had a higher relative reach among “change-oriented conservatives” than other Western broadcasters.

This group might have found the “Russianness” of RL’s broadcasts more appealing than the overtly Western character of broadcasters such as VOA, BBC, and Deutsche Welle. “Change-oriented conservatives” valued community and family ties: in short, stability. They would accept reforms as long as they were gradual and did not abruptly overturn established patterns. The implication was that RL needed to make further inroads into the conservative group, while continuing to appeal to the change-leaders in society.

POLITICAL CHANGE AND WESTERN RADIO LISTENING

RISC, for all its merits, lacked a robust political dimension, which was why we developed an additional socio-political model in conjunction with Prof. Jan Jerschina of Central European Market Research in Krakow. Jerschina was also a professor of Sociology at the famed Jagellonian University of Krakow. The PSE model (Politics, Security, Economics) was composed of ten scales which measured attitudes such as Authoritarianism, Leftism, Egalitarianism, Economic Statism, Nationalism, Political Mobilization, Entrepreneurship, Pro-Americanism, and Economic Optimism. It identified four different types of socio-political actors: Change Conductors, Passive Experts, Active Citizens, and Silent Citizens.

In 1994, we issued two studies of data derived from the spring survey of that year: one of Russia, and one of Poland. The findings were amazingly prescient.

Russia scored higher on the scales of Authoritarianism and Economic Statism, and Poland on Nationalism and Entrepreneurship. This suggested that Russia was finding it harder than Poland to leave the communist past behind, and foreshadowed how each country would develop in the future:

Russia is facing serious tensions, while at the same time it is integrating on the basis ... of economic statism and nationalism. This will result in the ruling elite being forced to compromise with the strong opposition against free

market transformation in order to promote stability. This opposition exists not only among Conductors of Change and Passive Experts but also among the Active Citizens and is widely spread among Silent Citizens.³⁵

This trend was reinforced by the Russian economic collapse, and it helps explain how Russia evolved in the 1990s and later under the Putin regime.

In Poland pro-reform forces were quite strong and it was thought that with backing from the West they might prevail.³⁶ The West had been slow to offer support to reformers, which had led to the victory of left-wing parties in recent parliamentary elections but, overall, socio-political tensions were weaker than in Russia. Although the foundations for a free-market economy had been laid by a political stratum that was pro-reform oriented, the PSE analysis showed that: “this stratum has not successfully created a strong constituency among the politically active citizenry. This was primarily because, without economic progress and an improvement in the standard of living for a large part of the citizenry, any arguments intended to make Active Citizens support the Conductors of Change cannot work.”³⁷

In due course, the standard of living in Poland improved, and the country was able to move in a different direction from Russia, until new challenges led to the growth of populist nationalism in the first decades of the twenty-first century.

As regards media behavior in Russia, the PSE study found that RL’s listeners were concentrated among Change-Conductors. They accounted for 21% of the station’s total audience.³⁸ If it was to reach larger audiences in the three most important segments—Change-Conductors, Passive Experts and Active Citizens—RL would need to send a message designed to weaken the influence of economic statism and help unite these groups around the values underlying democratic reforms and the construction of a free-market economy.³⁹ With the collapse of living standards during the period of “shock therapy,” this proved difficult if not impossible.

In Poland, the study found that RFE was reaching significant audiences among the most politically active part of the society. Change-Conductors accounted for 28% of the total audience, and Active Citizens for 21%. Clearly

³⁵ Jerschina, PSE Model, 66, REP.

³⁶ Jerschina, PSE Model, 67, REP.

³⁷ Jerschina, PSE Model, 68, REP.

³⁸ Jerschina, PSE Model, 69, REP.

³⁹ Jerschina, PSE Model, 69–70, REP.

RFE was well situated to provide an integrating voice in Poland, provided that it adopted a message capable of overcoming the tensions between the Change-Conductors and the Active Citizens. "If RFE were to withdraw from Central Europe this might weaken the political stratum at the moment when it faced increasing difficulties in reaching consensus with other groups around the values of democratic reforms and building a free market economy."⁴⁰ Sadly, RFE's Polish service was closed in 1997.

BUDGET CUTS FORCE INSTITUTE TO CLOSE

The RFE/RL Research Institute had been shuttered three years earlier.

The Radios and the Institute had been under threat for some time. In 1990, the administration of President George H.W. Bush envisaged simply eliminating RFE/RL. The Cold War was over! The Soviet Union was about to collapse! If Eastern Europe was free, why did the US taxpayer need to pay for surrogate broadcasts?

The Radios reached out for support to the leaders of the former Iron Curtain countries. Among those who responded were Václav Havel and Lech Wałęsa. A bipartisan Presidential Task Force was set up to explore the question. Its 11 members traveled to Munich and met with distinguished representatives of the newly independent countries, who told them that the Radios were a model for their domestic media and a bulwark against reversion to autocracy. In a report published in December 1991, the Task Force recommended that RFE/RL should "continue but evolve"—"evolving" being a euphemism for cutting costs. For the time being, the Bush administration would support us, but what would happen after that?

In an attempt to demonstrate that both broadcasting and research served a worthwhile function in the post-Cold War world, the BIB arranged for Susan Roehm and me to testify before a subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs committee in September 1992. Susan presented our pioneering focus group work, Sherwood Demitz described the work of USIA Research, and I evoked MOR's expanding survey research capabilities, emphasizing that we would soon be able to advance from describing to explaining RFE/RL's audience, and depicting not only where RFE/RL was, but where it could go.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Jerschina, PSE Model, 70, REP.

⁴¹ Testimony of R. Eugene Parta to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on International Operations, *New Directions in Audience Research at RFE/RL*, 23 September 1992, REP

But in 1993, Democratic Senator Feingold of Wisconsin, who had originally campaigned to close the Radios entirely, introduced a bill to merge RFE/RL with VOA. A major effort was mounted to keep the Radios alive. BIB Chairman Steve Forbes and Executive Director Mark Pomar paid visits to all the key members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, pointing out that RFE/RL's presence on the airwaves was now more than ever essential, if the former communist countries were to make a successful transition to a democratic market economy.⁴² Levels of support varied among the senators on the Foreign Relations Committee. Only one of them made the effort to learn more about the Radios and attend a BIB meeting. This was Senator Joseph Biden, the Chairman of the Committee, and he was won over:

It is beyond dispute that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty contribute immeasurably to developing democratic institutions in the former Soviet bloc. As a model of how independent media should function in a free society, and in keeping honest those who yearn to silence the press, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty remain central actors in the drama unfolding across the region. ... [T]o shut down RFE/RL at this critical juncture in history would be absurd.⁴³

Still, it was clear that RFE/RL would have to cut costs. For a start it could no longer afford to operate out of Germany, where costs were high, and where restrictive labor laws would prevent serious restructuring. A plan took shape to move broadcasting operations to Prague. The director of the Czech service, Pavel Pechacek, was an old friend and schoolmate of Václav Havel. He spent a long weekend in Prague during the summer of 1993. On hearing of the Radios' woes, Havel pointed out that the former federal parliament building at the top of Wenceslas Square had been standing empty since the Czechoslovak Federation had been dissolved. Havel and Pechacek thought it would make a perfect home for RFE/RL, and would be a powerful symbol of the Czech Republic's commitment to democracy.

Despite a lack of enthusiasm on the part of Radio management, Havel's offer was accepted the following year. In January 1994, the International Broadcasting

42 Mark G. Pomar, "A US National Media Strategy for the 2020s: Lessons from the Cold War," *Texas National Security Review*, Vol 4, Issue 1, Winter 2020/2021. This article carries a detailed exposition of the circumstances that led to RFE/RL's move to Prague in 1995.

43 Pomar, "A US National Media Strategy for the 2020s."

Act consolidated all US broadcasting entities under a single board, the Board of Broadcasting Governors. Thanks to the efforts of Senator Biden, RFE/RL's independent status was preserved, but its 1995 budget was slashed from \$208 million to \$75 million. The Radios would have to trim down their operations significantly, and there would not be enough money to cover the costs of the RFE/RL Institute. After a lengthy bureaucratic battle in Washington, President Clinton spoke to President Havel on the phone, Havel issued a formal invitation, and Clinton accepted the offer. The Radios moved to Prague in 1995, and there they remain, as a multi-media operation active in 23 countries and 27 languages.⁴⁴ In 2009, RFE/RL moved out of the parliament building into a state-of-the art, purpose-built building.

The Institute, however, was closed down. Replacement funding could not be found. Financial help was sought from George Soros' Open Society Foundation, but only a relatively small amount was forthcoming—enough to support a greatly reduced operation in Prague for a couple of years under the name of the Open Media Research Institute (OMRI). What really interested Soros was acquiring the Institute's unique Red Archive. It was moved to Prague and attached to the Central European University (CEU), another Soros project. When the CEU relocated to Budapest, the archive went with it, and it remains there to this day as the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archive.⁴⁵

IMPACT ON AUDIENCE RESEARCH

The closure of the Institute meant that the innovative research projects we had begun with RISC and the PSE Project were killed stone dead. It was a tremendous loss. In 1994, our cooperation with RISC was finally reaching the point where developments in societal change could be tracked over time, and it was deeply frustrating to see our work fall victim to shortsighted politicians. Alternative funding failed to materialize, and subsequent attempts to revive the projects did not succeed. It is one of the great regrets of my professional life that these efforts to penetrate the labyrinth of public opinion in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were never able to realize their full promise.

44 See RFE/RL website, www.rferl.org, for a description of this and other RFE/RL services. Information was current as of January 2022.

45 Donald Blinken was US Ambassador to Hungary between 1994 and 1997. His son Antony is currently (January 2022) US Secretary of State.

The 1994 spring surveys were conducted normally, but we were never able to exploit the data gathered to their full extent. The Institute closed on December 31, 1994, and active work ceased on October 31, 1994. By the summer many MOR staffers were actively seeking new positions, and we were left short-handed. Lynne and I hosted a farewell garden party at our home in Munich that brought together the current staff with some of the old hands from Paris. Nicole Kostomarov, Patricia Leroy, and Sallie Wise (who had married a Frenchman and returned to her old haunts) all joined us to celebrate what had been an exceptional working experience. The President of RFE/RL, Gene Pell, also joined us. The garden was in full bloom, the weather was wonderful, the tiramisu was memorable, as was the *confit de canard* that Nicole had brought from Paris.

Audience Research survived in truncated form. Some MOR staffers were relocated to Washington in a smaller unit headed by Mark Rhodes. Slavko Martyniuk, Peter Herrmann, and Susan Gigli went with him. Michael Haney stayed for a while but then left for graduate school. I remained in Europe as Director of Audience Research and Program Evaluation with RFE/RL in Prague. For a year Mark's unit operated under the umbrella of George Soros' Open Media Research Institute (OMRI), although it was entirely funded by RFE/RL. After that it was reconstituted independently as the InterMedia Survey Institute. As head of audience research for RFE/RL in Prague, I contracted surveys from InterMedia, and they provided listener data and focus groups using the network of institutes created by MOR in Eastern Europe and the FSU. Although we were working in a different structure, the end product was the same, except for the fact that there was no money left to continue projects such as RISC and PSE.

THE LAST HURRAH!

The Conference on International Broadcasting Audience Research (CIBAR), as noted earlier in this book, was an organization for members of the audience research units of all the major international broadcasters, and some minor ones too. It had grown from small beginnings into a large international organization which eventually regrouped 37 stations. In later years, I became chairman of the group and stayed involved with the conference until 2007.

But the memory that stays most clearly in my mind is the meeting that took place in November 1993. In Washington high-level budgetary discussions were well under way, the sword of Damocles was swinging lower and lower over our heads, but we hosted the annual conference in Munich in upbeat mood. It was a

final act of bravado. The meeting drew an impressive turnout. Attendees came from as far afield as Australia, South Africa, Japan, and China. All the European stations were present, as was Radio Moscow International (recently renamed the Voice of Russia), whose delegate was delighted to have the chance to visit the headquarters of RFE/RL, after seeing it vilified for years in the Soviet press. (It must have been quite a shock to see that it was a normal journalistic operation and not a den of spies!)

After a day of stimulating exchanges and debates, we organized a gala dinner for our guests at the Seehaus in the Englischer Garten. Inside the room glowed with light and hummed with conversation, outside the waves lapped at the shore and the wind rustled in the trees. And right at the center of this festive occasion was the office I had headed through good times and bad. After so many years of working under the radar, we had finally emerged from the shadows into full sight.

Past Successes, Future Challenges

2022

C o d a

During the Cold War, RFE/RL and other Western broadcasters played a critical role in keeping the populations of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union informed on world events, and in the case of RFE/RL their own societies as well. This contributed to ultimately preparing them for a life after communism. This is undisputed. Glowing testimonials to RFE/RL have come from such prominent figures as Boris Yeltsin, Mikhail Gorbachev, Václav Havel, and Lech Wałęsa. Asked about the role RFE played in Poland, Wałęsa responded: “Is the Sun important for the Earth?”

In 1991, President Lennart Meri of Estonia nominated RFE/RL for the Nobel Peace Prize. In the letter of nomination he wrote: “There is abundant evidence—including statements by the freely-elected leaders of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria—that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty have made and continue to make, a unique contribution to the rebirth of democracy in our region of the world, upon which lasting peace depends...”¹

Perhaps even more telling was a grudging accolade from the former East German spymaster Markus Wolf in his memoirs *Man Without a Face*: “Of all the various means used to influence people against the East during the Cold War, I would count [Radio Free Europe] as the most effective.”²

Why were Cold War radio broadcasts so compelling? In the book we edited, *Cold War Broadcasting*,³ Ross Johnson and I laid out nine reasons why we

¹ BIB Annual Report for 1992, 4, HIA.

² Markus Wolf, *Man Without a Face, the Autobiography of Communism's Greatest Spymaster* (New York: Public Affairs, 1997), as cited in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 346.

³ The book *Cold War Broadcasting* grew out of the conference of the same name held in October 2004 at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University, which was co-sponsored by the International Cold War History Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC.

thought they had been effective. In abridged form these were: “A sense of purpose congruent with the aspirations and possibilities of the audiences,” “A capability for a sophisticated appraisal of the adversary,” “Differentiated and tailored programs for multiple audiences within the target countries,” “Programs that were purposeful, credible, responsible and relevant to their audiences,” “Decentralized broadcast organizations,” “Multi-media operations,” “Appropriate funding and oversight mechanisms,” “Distance from official government policies and maintenance of journalistic independence,” “Receptive audiences that identified with many of the goals of the broadcasters.”

It is the second of these that I want to single out here: “A capability for a sophisticated appraisal of the adversary.” This is a relatively weak link in current US information programs. In 2010, Johnson and I wrote:

Significant Radio resources were devoted to detailed analysis of national Communist regimes and the societies they ruled, based on extensive information collection and associated research that drew on the Western press, official Communist sources, interviews with travelers, and regime opponents within the target countries. A cadre of specialized researchers was developed with deep area expertise. This information and analysis function was not envisaged at the outset. It was developed at the Radios over time in response to operational need. This resource provided major input to US government and scholarly analyses.⁴

All of RFE/RL’s research activities were aimed at achieving this “sophisticated appraisal of the adversary.” This was true of analytical research, audience research, and the samizdat archive, both before and after they were combined into the short-lived Research Institute. RFE/RL’s research efforts were unparalleled in the West. They made a major contribution to the success of the broadcasting operation, and were an invaluable resource for scholars, journalists, policy makers, and anyone called on to interact with the communist bloc.

In the Introduction to this book, I listed several questions related to issues of broadcaster credibility and listener trust. Here are some of the answers:

- Why did Soviet people believe some media and not others? What led to the widespread distrust of much domestic USSR media?

⁴ Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 347.

Soviet listeners believed information that was borne out by their own experience. If they tended to distrust their own media, that was because the propaganda endemic to domestic press and broadcasting ran counter to what they saw in their everyday lives. If RFE/RL was accepted as a trusted source, that was because it provided information that listeners found credible. That information was derived from a deep familiarity with Soviet society (and Russian culture as well as the cultures of the “national minorities”) which the Radios possessed, partly because its journalists had lived in the broadcast area, and partly because of the work of its researchers.

- How was trust and credibility in Western media developed in the Cold War context?

In a nutshell, credibility was developed by accurate factual reporting that listeners could check against their own experience. RFE/RL newscasts had to verify information using a two-source rule, while avoiding speculation, rumor-mongering, and anything that smacked of propaganda. Feature programs had more latitude, but again they had to be factually accurate in order to resonate with the listener. It was important not to strain credulity by presenting either a one-sided rosy-tinted picture of the West, or a totally negative picture of the listener’s country.

- How can disinformation best be countered? How was this done by Western broadcasting during the Cold War?

RFE/RL’s standard response was to counter disinformation with factual information in the belief that truth would ultimately win out. Polemics were to be avoided. At times, it was necessary to counter blatant disinformation, but this had to be skillfully done so it didn’t deteriorate into reciprocal name-calling. Countering disinformation was more easily done in the closed societies of the USSR and Eastern Europe, where information sources were limited. In our age of social media and multiple sources, it is much more difficult.

Peter Pomerantsev, an expert on the topic of Russian disinformation campaigns,⁵ has pinpointed an important distinction between the current social media situa-

5 See Peter Pomerantsev, *This is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality* (London: Faber and Faber, 2019), and *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).

tion and that of the communist era. Communist censorship patterns attempted to *shrink* the information space by limiting information that contradicted its own. Jamming of broadcasts was a preferred method. But current disinformation practice is to *expand* the information space, overloading it with, for example, bots which are not connected to real individuals but to “fake” people.⁶ The object is to create confusion by flooding the information zone. The result is that either information-seekers don’t know what to believe, or else they are so overwhelmed by a torrent of false information that they end up accepting falsehood as fact.

The solution to some of these problems may be partly technical. Ensuring that every message posted originates with a real person might shrink the information space to manageable proportions. But in terms of content, it is my conviction that facts will ultimately win out over disinformation. What I retain from my Cold War experience is that there will always be a thirst for truth in societies where it has been denied. And truth, as I’ve already said, must be based on research.

If US international media are to be effective in an environment shaped by new technologies, audience fragmentation, social media, active disinformation campaigns, and cyberwarfare, we must achieve a profound understanding of our broadcast targets. Countries such as Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea are formidable adversaries. We need to know as much as we can about them. The US Agency for Global Media (USAGM) is running quantitative surveys worldwide, and using sophisticated methodology to assess the impact of each of the broadcast services.⁷ These measures are indispensable for gauging the performance of the various US media entities, but they do not provide the in-depth appraisal of the adversary that was indispensable to the success of Western broadcasting during the Cold War.

In the early 1990s, the RFE/RL Research Institute combined state-of-the-art audience research into the broadcast area with penetrating analytical research into the political, cultural, economic, and social life of our target countries. No such centralized research organization exists today, and this hinders the efforts of US international broadcasting. We do not have the in-depth knowledge it takes to mount a successful media drive as we did during the Cold War. We lack an adequate understanding of how audiences receive and consume

6 USAGM Panel: “Global Disinformation vs. Democracy—Confronting the Existential Threat,” jointly conducted with the Aspen Institute. See [USAGM.gov/events](https://www.usagm.gov/events), 5 May 2021.

7 See *USAGM FY2019 Performance and Accountability Report* for details of its measurements of impact for all US media entities. This represents a considerable advance over what existed earlier, and provides a broad assessment of the effectiveness of each of the entities. <https://www.usagm.gov>.

both factual information and disinformation, and why they are apt to believe or disbelieve one or the other.

Obviously a certain amount of research is underway. Various think tanks such as the Wilson Center and the Brookings Institution and others carry out excellent studies of current events in the countries of interest, but rarely delve deeply into the societies concerned. USAGM has a robust program of audience surveys and impact studies, tailored mainly to meet its oversight function. These efforts are useful and necessary but, in the absence of a central collection and analysis point that integrates their findings with a deep understanding of the adversarial societies under study, their impact is diluted.

I would propose that the US revive a version of the RFE/RL Research Institute in a form adapted to the current political environment, and on a somewhat more modest scale. (The RFE/RL Research Institute had over 200 employees in the early 1990s.) What would be required is a relatively small number of top analysts specialized in each of the target countries, and possessing of course the relevant linguistic capabilities. They would undertake their own analysis, monitor research being conducted by other institutions, and integrate the product of USAGM audience research. Their analysis would be shared with the relevant media entities.

As I conceive it, the newly-created Research Center would be a support and analytical service. It would not become involved with directly countering foreign disinformation, which would remain the task of the USAGM media services through their multi-media programming and such efforts as *polygraph.info.* and the Global Engagement Center of the US Department of State.⁸ Nor would it infringe upon the essential work of the Open Technology Fund (OTF) which is doing critical work in promoting internet freedom.⁹

8 The Global Engagement Center's core mission as stated in www.state.gov is "To direct, lead synchronize, integrate, and coordinate efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining or influencing the politics, security, or stability of the United States, its allies and partner nations."

9 The Open Technology Fund's activities are described on www.usagm.gov. "OTF funds internet freedom technologies at every stage of development cycle from proof-of-concept, to on-the-ground deployments to multi-year efforts. This approach ensures that USAGM journalists and audiences have the tools they need right now to safely access the uncensored internet, while investing in innovative solutions to stay ahead of evolving censorship threats. In order to provide comprehensive support to internet freedom projects, OTF provides resources through a variety of implementation mechanisms." The Trump administration during its relatively brief control of USAGM through its appointed CEO tried to close down OTF.

As regards audience research, much of the work being done today is based on a template developed by SAAOR and MOR in the 1980s and 1990s. Quantitative survey research into broadcast and digital audiences continues to measure audience reach, listening behavior, and demographic composition. Qualitative research, such as focus groups and in-depth interviews, gives insightful responses to specific programming. In addition to this, state-of-the art research on USAGM digital programs provides advice on how to deal with issues both of use and of technical blockage. What I would recommend adding to the purview of a reconstituted audience research unit is the kind of sociographic research that MOR undertook in the early 1990s with RISC and the PSE model, perhaps in a form more suited to the current environment, as a way of achieving as keen an understanding as possible of the area of study.

Ideally the Research Center would be established using a grantee formula under USAGM, on the lines of RFE/RL, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Network. Independence was key to the success of both RFE/RL and SAAOR during the Cold War, and the Center would have greater operational freedom as a non-governmental grantee entity. For administrative savings it might be attached to one of the entities, such as RFE/RL which has had past experience with the RFE/RL Research Institute. It would be highly desirable to have an arms-length relationship with USAGM management. The fragility of the current USAGM structure was laid bare in 2020 when its CEO summarily fired all of the entity heads at the behest of the Trump administration, and voluntarily removed the firewall that prevented direct government interference in editorial matters.¹⁰ Although this damaging situation was corrected when the Biden Administration took power, the present structural arrangement is still fragile, and a future administration could again wreak havoc.¹¹

Setting up a new Research Center need not be cost-prohibitive and would probably not require additional statutory authority. If it were to be attached to one of the grantees, such as RFE/RL, administrative, human resource, and legal

10 For an account of this Trump administration fiasco and the threat it posed to US international media see Yasmeen Serhan, "The Ultimate Symbol of America's Diminished Soft Power," *The Atlantic*, February 23, 2021. Another useful article on the threat posed by the reorganization of USAGM under Trump is "An Abuse of Power," by Martha Bayles in *The American Interest* of July 13, 2020.

11 Ross Johnson and I proposed a new structure for USAGM which would provide more protection from political interference in a paper we published through the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in 2012. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta. "*A 21st Century Vision for U.S. Global Media.*" Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; History and Public Policy Program, Washington, DC. November 2012.

expenses could be shared. The current United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994, as amended, still governs all of U.S.-funded nonmilitary international broadcasting today.¹² Thus, broad statutory authority already exists for research efforts. What remains however is for Congress through the appropriation process to earmark more funds for the establishment of a Research Center under whatever name Congress should choose.¹³

It is not the purpose of this study to work out the precise administrative issues involved in establishing a Research Center, but to signal the need for such an entity and for its operational independence. During the Cold War period the RFE/RL Research Institute's product was widely valued beyond its principal client, RFE/RL broadcasting, with avid users in the Executive Branch of Government, on Capitol Hill, and in the journalistic and academic communities.

The lack of such a coherent and comprehensive research and analytical capability is a serious problem at a time when the US is encountering worldwide challenges.¹⁴ For the time being we are just about holding our own in the information

12 "United States international broadcasting shall — be based on reliable information about its potential audience." (22 U.S.C. 6202(a)(6) from "Broadcasting standards.") "United States international broadcasting shall — be designed so as to effectively reach a significant audience." (22 U.S.C.(a)(7) ... from "Broadcasting standards.") "United States international broadcasting shall include — reliable research capacity to meet the criteria under this section." (22 U.S.C. 6202(b)(8)... from "Broadcasting principles.")

13 This information is based on an email exchange with John Lindburg in early July 2021. Lindburg has had the opportunity to see U.S. international broadcasting from different vantage points. After starting with the U.S. Information Agency (and VOA) as Assistant General Counsel in 1973, he became the first and only General Counsel of the BIB (1988-1995), the first Legal Counsel to the first BBG board (1995-2000), and then the first in-house General Counsel of RFE/RL (2003-2012). Since 2013 he has had a consulting arrangement with RFE/RL.

14 Our lack of sufficient historical, cultural, and societal knowledge has led to tragedy in past US military involvements. I owe the following observation to John Lindburg in an email of July 6, 2021: "Regarding this point, Robert McNamara in his book about the war in Vietnam "In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam," wrote that "We viewed the people and leaders of South Vietnam in terms of our own experience... Our misjudgments of friend and foe alike reflected our profound ignorance of the history, culture, and politics of the people in the area, and the personalities and habits of their leaders." David Halberstam wrote in his book about the war in Vietnam, "The Best and the Brightest," that the Kennedy Administration made the "... most critical of decisions with virtually no input from anyone who had any expertise on the recent history of that part of the world. And it in no way factored in the entire experience of the French Indochina War." He added that one of the reasons for this ignorance was the arrogance of men who "... did not need to know about such a distant and somewhat less worthy part of the world." Indeed, our ignorance about the history, culture, minds, and hearts of the Vietnamese people cost 58,000 American lives, millions of Vietnamese lives, trillions of dollars, a loss of trust in the U.S. Government, and ended in tragic failure. Our superiority in weapons did not lead to victory. One could add recent US experience in Iraq and Afghanistan to this list. What differentiated Cold War success was our deep and thorough knowledge of the adversaries.

wars, but we need a comprehensive strategy and structure to prepare for current and future confrontations. If truth is to be a beacon to a world increasingly besieged by falsehood and disinformation, more must be done. In an era of resurgent nationalist populism and authoritarianism, democracy is at stake worldwide. Once almost unthinkable, even American democracy is under serious threat. We must learn from our past successes and act accordingly.

Ukraine 2022: The Information War

(*a g i t a t o*)

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. This was President Putin's second unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, eight years after his annexation of Crimea and incursion into the Donbas in 2014. The pretext this time was to "de-Nazify" Ukraine, counter what he saw as a threat posed by NATO, and protect Russian-speakers who were allegedly being persecuted. A huge military force had been building up on Ukraine's borders for several months, but Moscow vehemently denied it had any intention to invade—right up to the point when it did. Putin had apparently expected a quick victory and the fall of Kyiv in days, or at most weeks, but Ukrainian resistance led by President Zelensky proved to be far more stubborn and effective than he had foreseen. Western countries were prompt to offer aid and support, while the Russian army showed itself to be ill-prepared and extraordinarily inept. After failing to take Kyiv and oust the "Nazi" government, the Russian army moved the focus of its military activities to the Donbas and the coast along the Sea of Azov in an attempt to create a land corridor to Crimea that it has hopefully dubbed Novorossiia (New Russia). Such is the status of Putin's "special military operation" at the time of this writing (May 2022).

It is not the purpose of this Afterword to dwell on the military details of the war, but rather to examine the "information war" that Moscow has carried out inside its own borders to camouflage and justify its invasion in the eyes of Russian citizens. Putin's efforts to control information are reminiscent of the Soviet era, though in some respects even more extensive. The regime set out to shrink the information space well before the advent of military hostilities. The 2019 "foreign agent" law¹

1 The "foreign agent" law was originally passed in 2012 to denote NGOs funded from abroad. In 2019, the definition of "foreign agent" was expanded to include media funded from abroad, obliging them

had long been used to harass broadcasters such as Radio Liberty, VOA, and BBC, that operated in the Russian language on Russian soil, and now it was used to close them down or expel them. All remaining foreign NGOs were also expelled, with Carnegie Moscow the last to go. The regime then moved against Russian independent media, closing the radio station Ekho Moskvyy (Moscow Echo), the television station Dozhd (Rain), and the newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, whose editor Dmitry Muratov won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2021. Popular news-oriented websites such as Meduza, located in Latvia, but widely accessed in Russia, were also blocked. This has given Putin almost complete control of the Russian media space. State television and radio and compliant press outlets have provided a one-sided version of the war in Ukraine, which they have been instructed to refer to not as a “war” but as a “special military operation.” Public use of the term “war” has in fact been banned, and can lead to a jail sentence of up to fifteen years. All of this means that the Russian population has little understanding of what is happening in Ukraine. It knows only what its government wants it to know.

So what exactly does Putin want Russian citizens to know? How is the “special military operation” being presented in the state-controlled media? Russian television has been pushing the claim that Ukraine is not a real nation, but a constituent part of Greater Russia. In July 2021, Putin published a rambling essay, seemingly much influenced by the fascist thinker Ivan Ilyin (1883–1954), explaining that Russia and Ukraine have always been a single nation. One of the aims of the “special operation” is to protect Russian-speakers in Ukraine, who are allegedly threatened with “genocide,” and another is to “liberate” the Ukrainian people from their “Nazi” leaders. The Nazi theme might seem absurd, especially since the President of Ukraine is a Russian-speaking Jew, but Nazi antisemitism was never widely discussed in the USSR: instead the term is being used to evoke the Soviet victory over the Nazis in the Great Patriotic War (i.e., World War II). Eight decades after the war, the Nazi threat still resonates strongly with the Russian population, due to judicious use of propaganda and annual military parades on May 9 (VE Day in Russia) in Red Square. In contrast to the purges of the 1930s, and the years of stagnation and dissidence in the 1960s and 1970s, the Great Patriotic War represents the one moment in Soviet history that brought all Soviet citizens together in a common cause.

to label anything they published with a disclaimer indicating their status as a foreign agent. The term “foreign agent” bears a negative connotation dating from the Soviet period, and carries implications of espionage.

Alongside its ostensible mission of liberation, the “special operation” is also claimed to be essentially defensive in nature: a response to the threat represented by the presence of NATO in countries that share a border with Russia. In recent weeks, it has also been suggested that Ukraine was on the verge of invading Russia. Media accounts of the progress of the “operation” remain discreet, and estimates of Russian losses in terms of personnel and materiel are mostly passed over, despite the high figures indicated by both Ukrainian and Western sources.

How have Western media countered the barrage of regime propaganda? Despite being deprived of the journalistic assets built up over three decades in post-Soviet Russia, they have adapted to the situation in new and creative ways. RFE/RL’s Moscow bureau has been moved to Riga and Vilnius. Working with its headquarters in Prague, RFE/RL maintains links with stringers inside Russia, and provides a full range of programming on social media, mainly Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram, which are widely used by Russians.² RL’s Russian-language streaming TV service, *Current Time*, produced with support from VOA, remains active. The RFE/RL website contains instructions on how to access non-Russian media, how to use a VPN (Virtual Private Network), and how to get a TOR browser to access RFE/RL “onion sites” and “mirror sites.”³ As quickly as RFE/RL moves to establish new “mirror sites” the Russian government attempts to block them, which leads to a kind of “whack-a-mole” situation, but RFE/RL has so far managed to stay ahead. While these measures provide at least partial information on the war, the Russian information-seeker unfortunately requires a computer and a minimum of computer literacy to make them work. Many Russians have neither. A less cutting-edge tactic has been adopted by the BBC, which has resumed broadcasting on short-wave, in the time-honored fashion of the Cold War. It’s unlikely that many Russians still own shortwave receivers, but for those that do, the extensive jamming network of Soviet times has probably also fallen by the wayside.

Probably the most effective way to access outside information is the use of a Virtual Private Network (VPN). The RFE/RL website describes VPNs as “*a tool that allows a person to mask their location and identity by linking up with a computer server in a different location. It also is an encrypted or secure tool, meaning*

2 The outbreak of the war saw a remarkable jump in social media usage of RFE/RL materials. From February 23 to March 1, audiences viewed RFE/RL videos 436 million times on Facebook, 305 million times on YouTube, and 83 million times on Instagram – reflecting increases of 265%, 406%, and 185%, respectively, over the previous week. See USAGM press release of 5 March 2022.

3 For a detailed explanation of these methods, see www.rferl.org “How to Bypass Blocking.”

once a user activates a VPN it's very difficult (though not impossible) to intercept the data and information that goes back and forth." The sites most often accessed through VPNs are Facebook and Telegram. Moscow has been hesitant to shut them down, since they are widely used among the population at large. (Curiously, the same is true of the encrypted messaging service WhatsApp, also much used by Russians.) A recent article in the *Washington Post* noted a tremendous surge in VPN downloads,⁴ and mentioned a Moscow resident who said it brought back memories of the 1980s in the Soviet Union when he used a short-wave radio to hear news of dissidents on Radio Liberty. The *Post* article reported that downloads of the ten most popular VPNs had gone from under 15,000 before the war to nearly 300,000 a day by early May, while Russian internal surveys estimate the number of VPN users at roughly 30 percent of the country's 100 million internet users.

Outrage against the war has prompted energetic reactions in primarily younger segments of the population, but the mass demonstrations that took place early in the war were put down with force, while later individual protests resulted in jail terms. At the present time, there are virtually no public protests any more. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of mostly young, highly-educated Russians have left the country. This is a major loss, not just for the Russian economy, but also for Russian democracy. Putin's public attitude has been one of "good riddance" to what he terms "national traitors." This mirrors his attitude toward economic sanctions, as he claims that Russia will be better off relying on itself and not on Western goods.

But what of the rest of the population—the majority—who have no desire to leave and no access to alternative sources of information? How is Putin's narrative being received by those who rely uniquely on State media? As far as we can tell, it seems that wall-to-wall propaganda is working. The false narrative used by official media to dominate the information space has done its job. Dehumanizing the Ukrainians as "Nazis" makes it easier to kill them. (The irony of Slavs killing other Slavs appears to having been overlooked.) There have been numerous reports in the Western press of Ukrainians speaking to families and friends in Russia who refuse to believe that the Russian army is targeting civilians. Russian television has consistently labelled these reports as "fake news," claiming that the

4 Anthony Faiola, "How Millions of Russians are Tearing Holes in the Digital Iron Curtain," *Washington Post*, 6 May 2022.

photos showing dead civilians, such as in Bucha, were “staged” by the Ukrainians, and viewers apparently believe this.

Public opinion polling has shown a high level of support for the war. A poll by the independent Levada Center in early April showed that 81% of respondents supported the “special operation,” and 51% said they felt “pride in Russia.” Support was somewhat higher among older people. Those who felt no “pride in Russia” tended to be younger, and they described their feelings as anxiety, fear, horror, or simply shock. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, the journalist Andrei Kolesnikov claims: “It is clear that Russians feel besieged and, often, just as embittered as Putin himself.” Noting that Putin’s approval rating soared to 83% in March, up 12% from the previous month, Kolesnikov compares this to reactions to the annexation of Crimea in 2014, though he adds that, “back then, the climate was altogether more benign, and those who opposed Putin’s actions did not face humiliation by their peers.”⁵

The Levada figures are probably on the high side, given the likelihood of response bias in a climate of fear, but having worked closely with its predecessor organization VTsIOM and later with the Levada Center itself, I can testify that the Levada Center is a competent and honest survey research firm.⁶ According to Denis Volkov, one of the Center’s collaborators, “the divisions among Russians about Putin’s war in Ukraine have been strikingly stable ... because they reflect long-standing divisions among Russians about the Putin regime...”⁷

These divisions can in fact be traced back to the Cold War. SAAOR’s attitudinal study of the Soviet population, dated 1984, foreshadowed to a remarkable degree the perceptions of present-day observers of Russian society.⁸ As Volkov says, “Supporters of the war, the less educated, the older and those who rely on television, have become even more supportive of Putin than they were, while opponents, the more educated, the younger and those who get their information

5 Andrei Kolesnikov, “Russians at War: Putin’s Aggression has turned a Nation Against Itself,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 18, 2022.

6 The Levada Center came into being when the Russian government took over VtsIOM in August 2003 and the employees walked out and established a new organization which came to be known as the Levada Center. Although branded as a “foreign agent” in 2016 it continues to conduct survey research with integrity, although there are severe problems that face public opinion polling in a politically repressive environment.

7 Denis Volkov, ridl.io/rossijskoe-obshhestvennoe-mnenie-o-spetsoperatsii-v-ukraine/ (Russian Public Opinion on the Special Operation in Ukraine) as reported by Paul Goble in “50 Windows on Eurasia for April 12–18, 2022”, item #4.

8 R. Eugene Parta, *Civil Liberties and the Soviet Citizen: Attitudinal Types and Western Radio Listening*, AR 6-84, September 1984, HIA. The report is discussed on p. 140, above, and shown in Chart 5.

from the internet, have become if anything more fixed in their views...” A few weeks later, Michael McFaul, Stanford professor and former US Ambassador to Russia, noted in an interview with the former counselor to Obama, David Axelrod of the University of Chicago, that “about 30% of the Russian population are hard-core Putin supporters (older, poorer, more rural, less educated) and they’re unreachable; about 15% are Navalny supporters (younger, more educated, richer, more urban); and the rest are in the middle, what the Russians call the ‘swamp,’ and this is where our communications efforts have to do better.”⁹

McFaul’s 15% of Navalny supporters corresponds almost exactly to the 13% of the population that we defined as Liberal in 1984, and there may also be a correlation between McFaul’s 30% of “unreachables” and the 40% of Conservatives/Hardliners identified in SAAOR’s report. Despite all the changes that have taken place over the past forty years, it appears that the attitudinal structure of Russian society remains basically unchanged.

The critical role of information in forming or reinforcing attitudes to the war in Ukraine is extremely clear. Where you get your information will largely dictate your position on the war.¹⁰ “The increasing blocking of independent media and the ban on criticizing the military has not so much changed sentiments as reinforced already established views,” says Denis Volkov. By excluding almost all alternative information, state-controlled media have been able to rally most, though not all, Russians to their point of view.

Will this continue if the war drags on and casualties mount? We should not forget that body bags returning from Afghanistan helped swing the tide of public opinion against war forty years ago. The West must redouble its efforts to reach that part of the population that might be persuadable—i.e. the “swamp.” This will not be an easy task. At the end of the Cold War, the Soviet public was relatively open to Western communication efforts, but this is not the case now. The latter years of the USSR were marked by widespread disillusion with communism and the failure of the Soviet economic system. But three decades of continuing economic hardship, regime floundering, and perceived political humiliations

9 CNN broadcast of April 28, 2022, “The AXE Files with David Axelrod.” This is a paraphrase of McFaul’s remarks which can be found around Minute 50 of the interview. <https://edition.cnn.com/audio/podcasts/axe-files/episodes/8b95f4e8-5432-4f53-880f-ae850013b11d>.

10 Two excellent pieces on the issues involved are by Peter Pomerantsev in *The Atlantic* of May 1, 2022: “We Can Only Be Enemies: One Family’s Experience of Vladimir Putin’s Invasion Offers a Path to End the War,” and Serge Schmemmann in the *New York Times* of May 5, 2022, “The Information War in Ukraine is Far from Over.”

tion have provided fertile ground for the regime to awaken a sense of victimization, and stir up Russian national patriotism in support of the war. The sanctions imposed by the West, while justified, will unfortunately play into this narrative.

The challenge for the West will be to provide information that will encourage Russians to question their government's war-waging policy, and reassure them their country is not under siege, that the nihilistic visions of their leaders are unfounded, that they have no reason to resent or fear the West, and that Russia still has a place in the family of nations.

Charts Referenced in Narrative

The following charts, and some of the text accompanying them, appeared in my earlier work *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR During the Cold War* (Stanford, Ca.: Hoover Institution Press, 2007), and are included here by kind permission of the publisher.

Chart 1

Weekly Reach of Major Western Broadcasters in the USSR: 1980–1990 (Total Adult Population 16 years and older)

During the period 1980–1990, listening patterns were fairly consistent. The combined weekly reach of the major broadcasters oscillated around 25%. VOA had the highest weekly reach, at around 15%, until jamming was lifted on Radio Liberty in 1989. BBC was firmly anchored in the 5–10% range and Deutsche Welle hovered around 5% until 1986, when it began a slow but steady decline to around 2% in 1990.

The only station showing a major shift was Radio Liberty. The audience climbed from around 7% in 1980 to around 10% in 1985, and stayed there until jamming ended in November 1988. At that point, its audience increased dramatically. In terms of audience size, Radio Liberty was the leading Western broadcaster in 1989 and 1990.

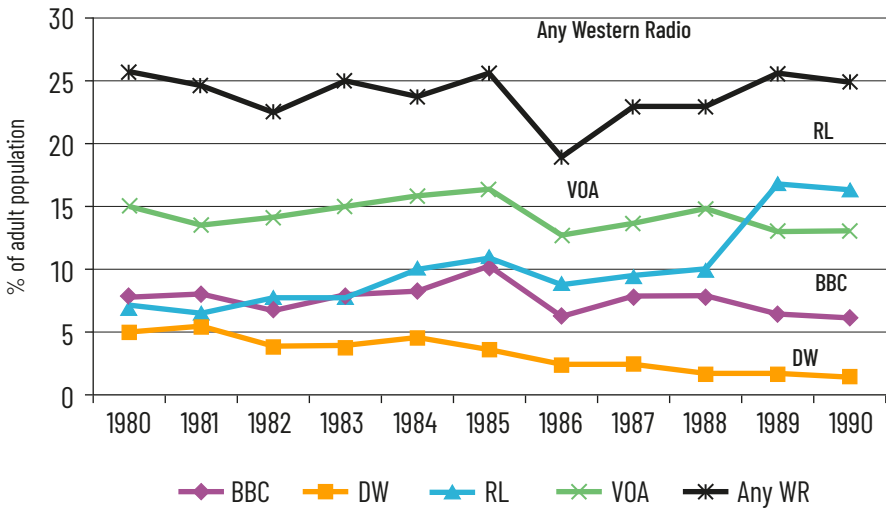


Chart 2

Weekly Reach of Major Western Broadcasters Among the Core Audience: 1980–1990 (Adult, Urban, Educated Population)

Most listeners to Western radio belonged to the segment of the population which lived in urban areas and had at least a secondary education. For shorthand purposes, this has been designated the “core audience.” This corresponded more or less to the “target audience” for Western radio. Chart 2 shows listening trends among the core audience (in 1990, the referent population was 47.3 million people, compared to 209.8 million for the total adult population).

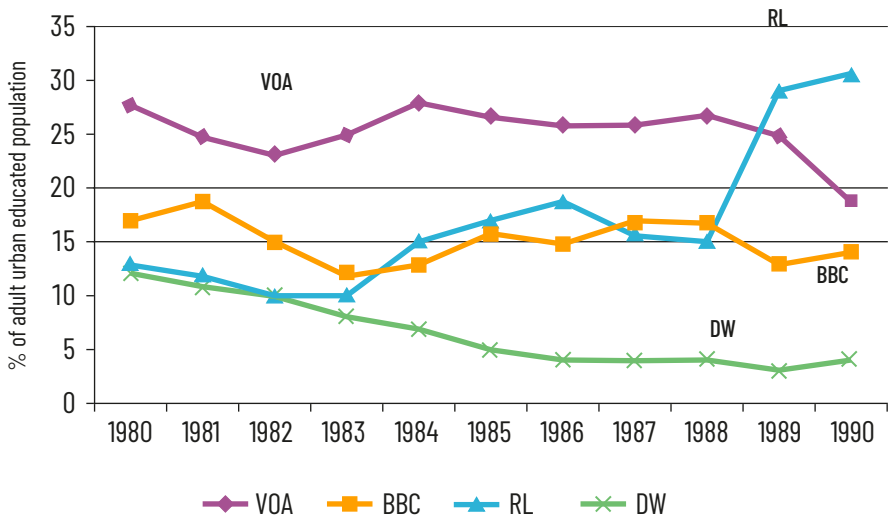


Chart 3

Annual Reach of Western Broadcasters to the USSR: 1980–1990

Chart 3 shows the total *annual* reach of each of the major Western broadcasters to the USSR. The annual reach curves for individual stations follow a similar pattern to the weekly reach curves, but at higher rates. Annual figures demonstrate the potential for audience expansion during times of crisis. At such times, regular (weekly) listeners to Western radio would be supplemented by occasional listeners, who tended to tune in only in response to specific events. Combining the weekly audience and the occasional audience gives the total annual reach of each broadcaster.

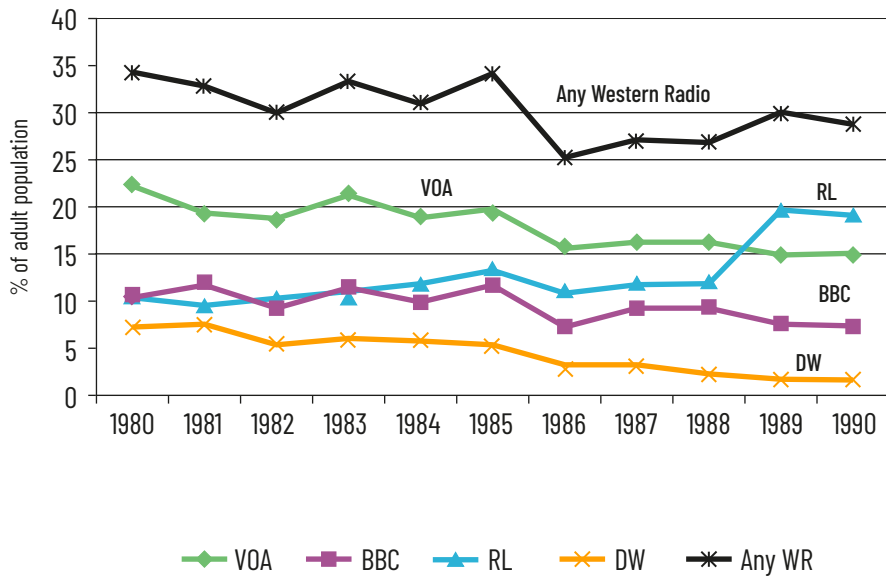
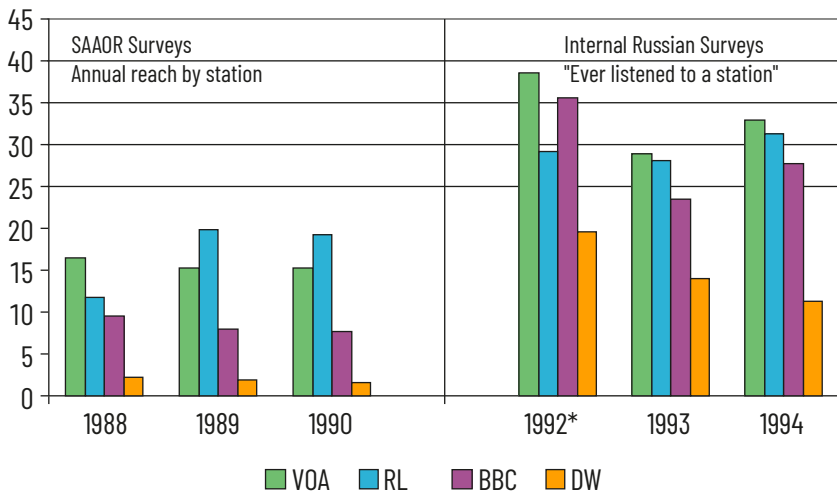


Chart 4

Comparison of Findings from SAAOR Surveys 1988–1990 and Russian Surveys 1992–1994

Studies conducted by internal institutes in the immediate post-Soviet period not only confirmed the figures in the above charts but implied that listening rates might have been even higher. ISAN in 1992 found that listeners who had “ever listened” to Western radio were in the 30%-50% range (though these figures might have been inflated by exceptionally high listening during the attempted putsch). Still, Vox Populi in 1992 and ROMIR in 1993–94 came up with a Cold War audience range of 30% to 40%, which remained fairly stable till the end of the decade.

Findings on annual reach for the major Western broadcasters in SAAOR traveler surveys in 1998-1990 all fit comfortably within the results from internal Russian surveys conducted in 1992, 1993, and 1994 on those who had “ever listened” to a given station. This increases our confidence that the earlier SAAOR estimates were credible and reasonable.



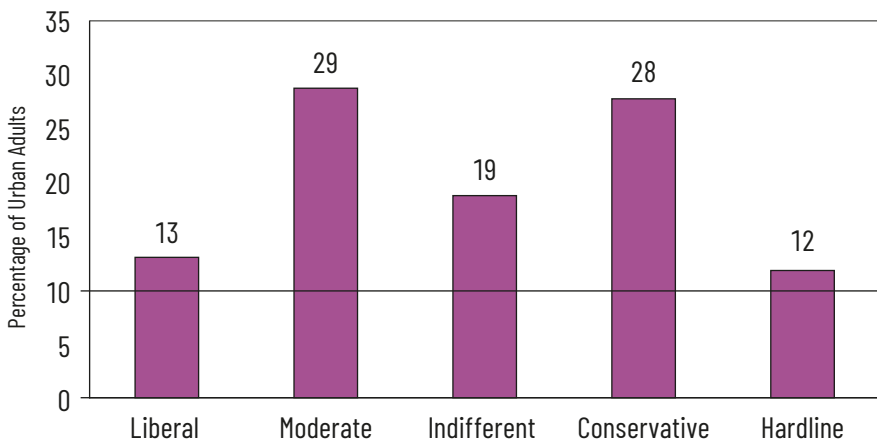
*1992 Vox Populi Survey, 1993-1994 ROMIR Surveys

Chart 5

Attitudinal Types in the Soviet Urban Population

In 1984, SAAOR published an attitudinal typology of urban Soviet citizens based on over 3,000 interviews with Soviet travelers to the West in the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹ Five questions, determined on the basis of a factor analysis, provided a scale that broadly segmented the population on a spectrum from Hardline to Liberal according to their attitudes toward civil liberties in the USSR. Chart 5 gives a breakdown of the urban population of the USSR in terms of these five attitudinal types.

Liberals and Hardliners were at roughly equal strength in the urban population, with one in eight subscribing to one or the other position. Moderates and Conservatives mirrored each other as well, with approximately three in ten in each camp. About one in five urban Soviet citizens could be classified as Indifferent or neutral, occupying the center of the scale.

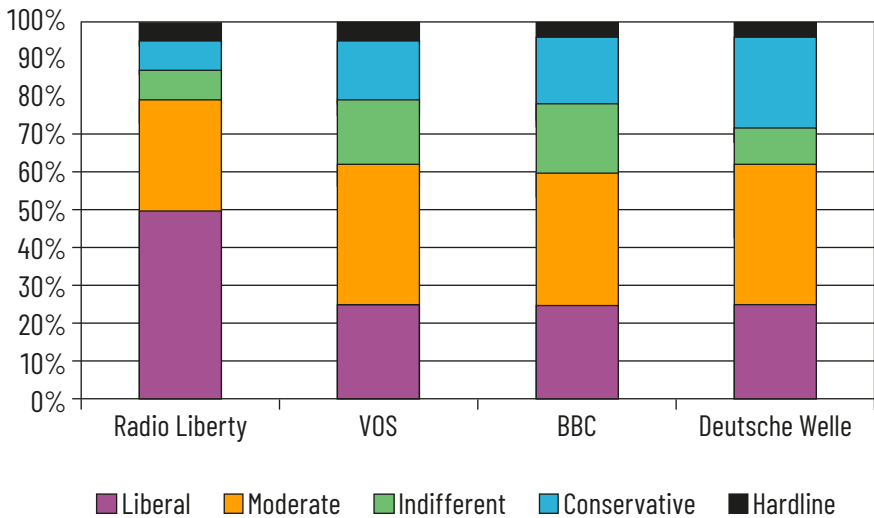


¹ R. Eugene Parta, "Civil Liberties and the Soviet Citizen: Attitudinal Types and Western Radio Listening," AR 6-84, September 1984, HIA.

Chart 6

Audiences to Western Broadcasters by Attitudinal Type

In terms of media use, Liberals were much more likely to be listeners to Western radio than any of the other types.² Almost 80% of the group said that they listened to the broadcasts. The individual Western stations attracted different types of listeners in terms of political orientation. Chart 6 shows that half of Radio Liberty's audience was composed of Liberals and another 30% were Moderates, giving RL a sharper ideological profile than the other major broadcasters. Given the harder-edged political broadcast style of Radio Liberty this is not surprising. The audiences to VOA, BBC, and Deutsche Welle were all dominated by Moderates, who outnumbered Liberals two to one in the urban population.

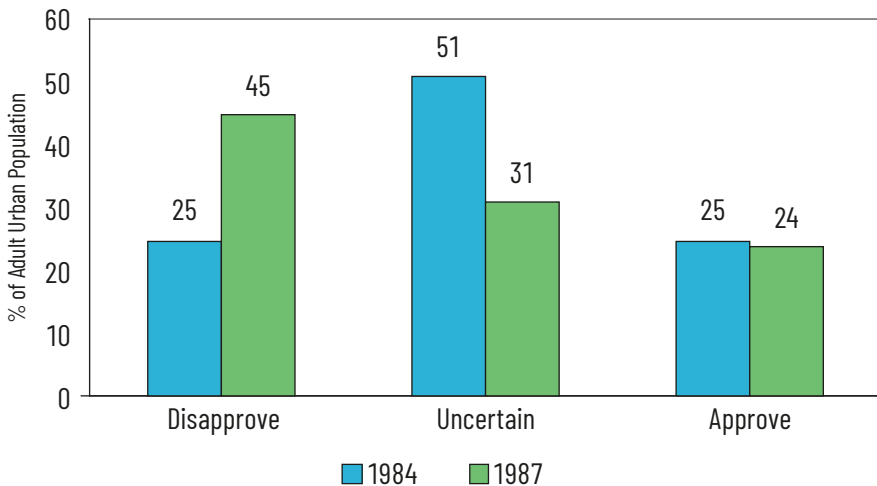


² Parta, *Civil Liberties and the Soviet Citizen*, 15.

Chart 7

Attitudes Toward Soviet Policy in Afghanistan: 1984–1987 (Urban Adult Population)

SAAOR began gathering data on the attitudes of Soviet citizens to the war in Afghanistan in the early 1980s, and published its first findings on the subject in 1985. In 1988, a trend report tracing the evolution of attitudes toward the war, and the role that Western radio played in informing Soviet listeners (based on 6,059 data cases), showed that disapproval of the war had risen from one-quarter of the population in 1984 to almost half in 1987, while those who held no opinion had dropped from about half to one in three.³ Those who had been uncertain in their attitudes had moved toward disapproval, while approval rates had held steady. In the early years of the war, respondents tended either to minimize its importance and avoid expressing a viewpoint, or to recite stereotyped responses based on domestic Soviet propaganda. It was only after several years of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan that clearly-defined attitudes toward the war began to be expressed by a majority of respondents in the traveler survey.



³ Sallie Wise, *The Soviet Public and the War in Afghanistan: Discontent Reaches Critical Levels*. AR 4-88. May 1988. HIA.

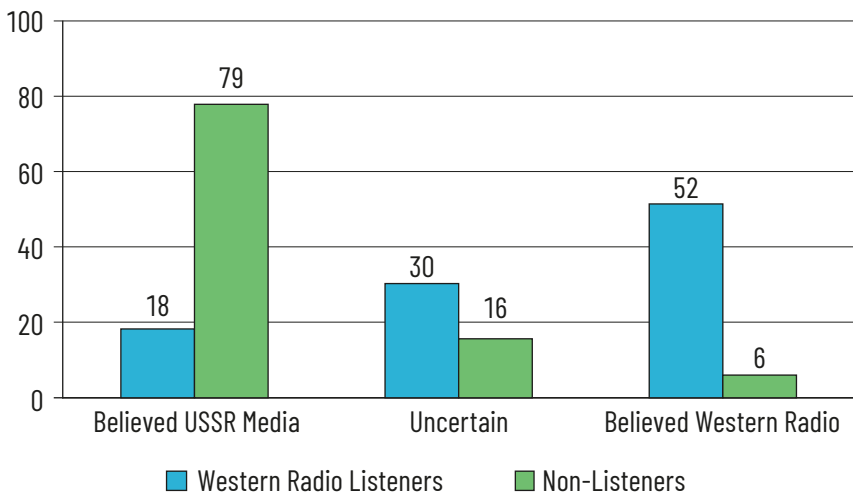
Chart 8

Credibility of Media Sources on KAL Incident Among Listeners and Non-Listeners to Western Radio

Western radio was mentioned by 45% of respondents as an information source on the KAL incident in 1983, and compared favorably with Soviet TV and radio in this respect.⁴

A striking dichotomy in attitude was found between those who had heard about the incident on Western radio and those who had only heard the official Soviet version. About 80% of non-listeners to Western radio accepted the official Soviet version of events, while only 18% of Western radio listeners found the Soviet version credible. Over half the Western radio listeners believed the version of the incident they had heard on the broadcasts, while another 30% were uncertain which version to believe.

The relatively large percentage of “don’t knows” among the Western radio listeners may stem from the fact that they had been exposed to two conflicting versions of the incident and found it difficult to reach a conclusion. But their readiness to express uncertainty indicated a reluctance to accept the official version in the face of contradictory information.



⁴ R. Eugene Parta and Kathleen Mihalisko, *The Korean Airliner Incident: Western Radio and Soviet Perceptions*. AR 4-84. April 1984. HIA

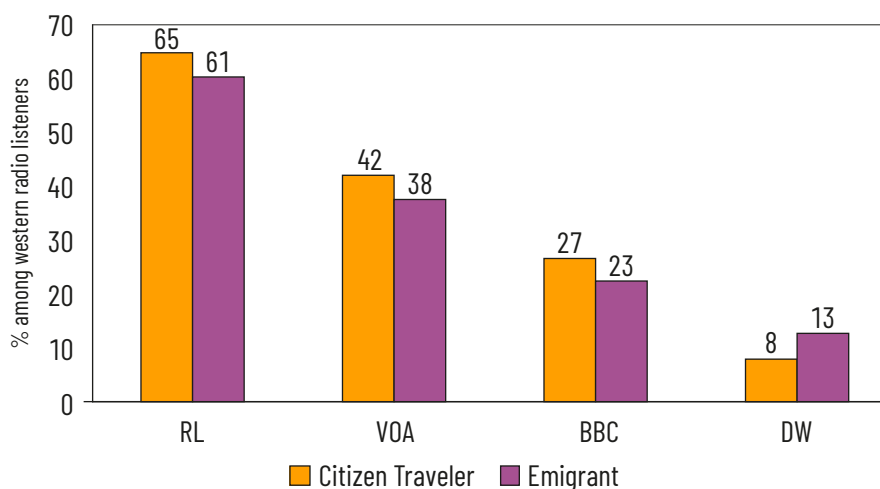
Chart 9

Stations Heard by Western Radio Listeners: A Comparison of Traveler and Emigrant Data: 1990

In 1990, Radio Liberty was the station most widely heard by Western radio listeners in each sample, followed by VOA, BBC, and Deutsche Welle.⁵ During this period all stations were unjammed.

In the 1970s and 1980s, VOA was the most widely heard station, according to both emigrant and traveler surveys. Radio Liberty and Deutsche Welle were jammed throughout this period until November 1988. VOA and BBC had unjammed periods.

The fact that the two different samples yielded similar results increases our confidence in the reliability of the data from SAAOR traveler surveys.



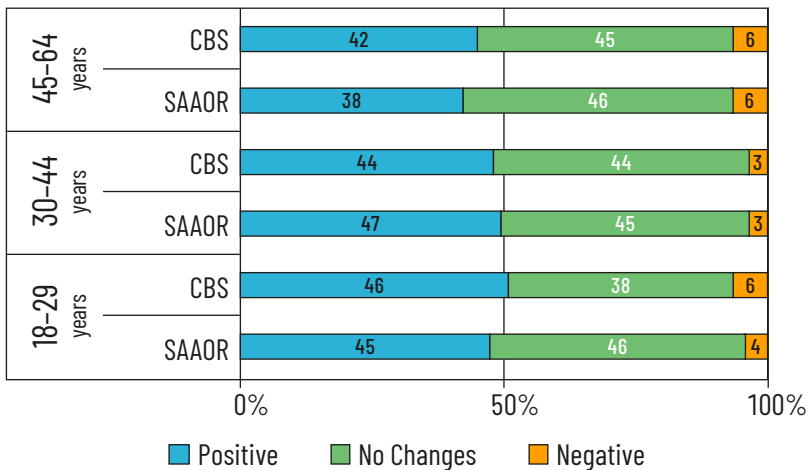
⁵ R. Eugene Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR During the Cold War* (Stanford, Ca.: Hoover Press, 2007), 83–84.

Chart 10

Comparison of CBS–*New York Times* Internal USSR Poll with SAAOR Survey on Benefits of Perestroika: 1988

In 1988, a CBS–*New York Times* poll queried Muscovites on their attitudes toward perestroika. SAAOR was posing similar questions in its traveler surveys at about the same time.⁶ The comparative results of the two polls, when examined in terms of age categories, are very close. The two polls showed approximate equal levels of support (or “no change”) in each age range. Negative responses were very small in each poll.

The CBS–*New York Times* poll also queried respondents on how well they felt the USSR had succeeded in its policy in Afghanistan. Twenty-five percent felt that Soviet policy had completely succeeded, a view which was shared by 27% of respondents in the SAAOR poll at this point in time (it would decline a year later). At the other end of the scale, Soviet policy in Afghanistan was deemed to have failed by 33% of respondents in the CBS–*New York Times* poll and 37% in the SAAOR poll. The similarity of the internal and external poll results boosted our confidence in SAAOR data.



6 Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 89–90.

Chart 11

Foreign Radio Listenership During the Coup Attempt of August 1991

Foreign radio was widely used during the coup attempt. While the coup was taking place MOR contacted Institutes in the USSR with which we had been working to determine listening to foreign radio. Radio Liberty's Russian service was most widely heard but both VOA and BBC had significant audiences as well. The table below was provided to the BIB by MOR and appeared in the BIB Annual Report for 1992, p.41.

Foreign Radio Listenership During the Coup

	Moscow	Akadem- gorodok	Novo- sibirsk	Lithuania	Yerevan	Riga	Tallinn	Kiev	Tblisi
IN RUSSIAN									
RL	30%	26%	14%	35%	30%	38%	17%	24%	12%
VOA	15	18	11	18	20	28	10	13	10
BBC	18	15	6	18	15	20	9	15	10
IN NATIONALITY LANGUAGES									
RFE/RL	-	-	-	29	18	18	10	11	10
VOA	-	-	-	29	20	14	7	4	9
Number	1,000	202	810	1,000	1,200	501	508	726	615

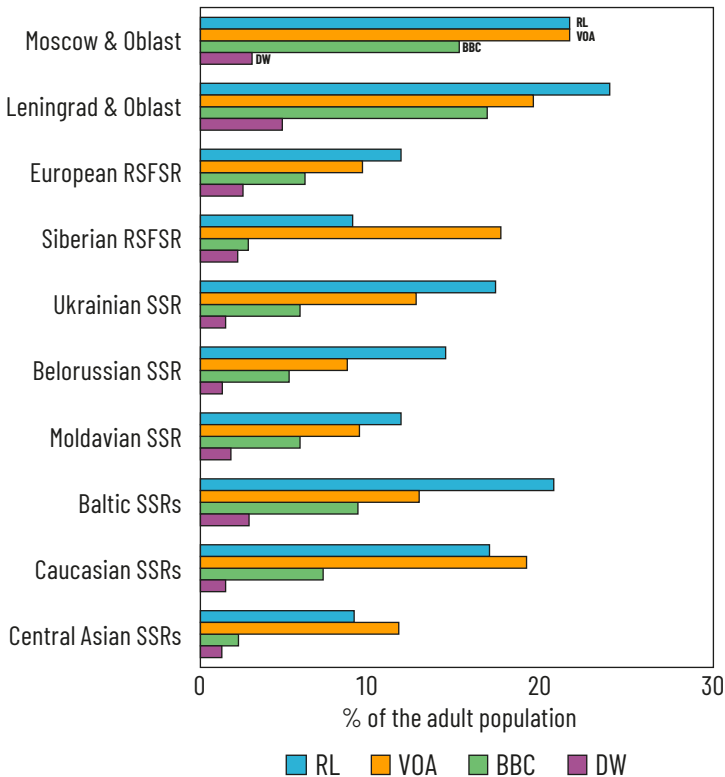
*Based on face-to-face and telephone interviews.

Chart 12

Weekly Reach of Western Radio in Ten Regions of the USSR: 1989

In 1990 SAAOR was able to issue improved estimates of listening to Western radio in different regions of the USSR. This was possible due to the increased sample size with a greater regional diversity than heretofore and the development of an improved methodology by Dr. Ree Dawson of MIT.⁷

Chart 12 does not distinguish between languages of listening, whether in Russian or a national minority language. This accounts for Radio Liberty's higher ratings in those areas where it broadcast in the local language as well as in Russian: Ukraine, Belorussia, the Baltic States, and the Trans-Caucasus. During this period all of the stations were unjammed.



⁷ R. Eugene Parta and Ree Dawson, MIT. "Revised Geographic Estimates to Foreign Radio in the USSR for 1988 and 1989: Introduction of Log-Linear Imputation Techniques for Geographic Estimates," AR 2-90, June 1990, HIA.

Some of Those Who Crossed My Path

In the course of my years with Radio Liberty, I was privileged to meet and work with a great many original and distinguished figures: American public servants dedicated to their mission of keeping US international broadcasters on the airwaves; eminent Russian writers who contributed their talents to Radio Liberty and believed ardently in its vocation; and a number of talented and quirky individuals without whom our work in the field could never have succeeded. This section includes short vignettes of some of these remarkable people.

1. RFE/RL Employees

MAX RALIS (1916–1999): Director of RL Audience Research

(edited extracts from the obituary of Max I wrote for Inside RFE/RL, April 8, 1999.)

As the founder and longtime director of Radio Liberty’s Audience Research department, Max Ralis was one of the postwar social scientists who made a difference in the world that was the focus of their study. In the words of the eminent social scientist Leo Bogart: “He provided crucial guidance for an organization that conveyed truth and offered hope to the peoples of the Soviet Union, and helped inspire the political forces that killed it off.”

Max was born in Moscow in 1916 to parents who left Russia after the Revolution. He grew up in Berlin in the 1920s, emigrated to France in the 1930s when the Nazis came to power, and left for the US after the fall of France in 1940. He was involved in several major sociological studies of the post-war scene in Europe, starting with surveys of the German population on behalf of the Psychological Warfare Division of SHAEF (General Eisenhower’s headquarters). From there he went to the Air Force Human Resources Research Institute at Maxwell Field

in Alabama, before returning to Paris to plan and supervise surveys of European public opinion. In 1951, he became a consultant to the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project, interviewing Displaced Persons from the USSR. His last job before coming to Radio Liberty was leading a Cornell University group conducting studies of village life in India. He was also one of the original founders of the World Association of Public Opinion Research.

After his early wanderings, Max found an intellectual home and activist base at Radio Liberty. In 1956 he founded the Audience Research Department at the behest of RL President Howland Sargeant. He retired from RL at age 65 in 1981. His retirement was spent in Orléans, France, with his wife Danièle.

Max became a legend in his own time at Radio Liberty. Given the near impossible task of trying to gauge an audience that couldn't be directly encountered on its own turf, he devised a number of ingenious methods to get a handle on how Radio Liberty was reaching its listeners.

He was always more comfortable with the part of the work that involved human contact than with the abstract analytical side. For him, the people behind the numbers were what really mattered, and personal stories engaged him more than numerical accounts. An idealist and activist, Max was personally very secure in himself. This allowed him to be extraordinarily generous and forthcoming with new arrivals from the East, both defectors and emigrés. He assisted scores of them materially, out of his own pocket, and always had time to give good counsel. There was scarcely a major figure in the emigration who hadn't met and been befriended by Max. When they dropped by the Audience Research office in Paris they wouldn't speak of coming to Radio Liberty but "to Max."

It wasn't only refugees from the East who appreciated Max. He was on first-name terms with many of the leading Western academics and practitioners in his field, and the Paris office was a regular stop for Wilbur Schramm, Ithiel de Sola Pool, Daniel Lerner, Paul Lazarsfeld, and many others when they came to Europe.

To his own staff over the years, Max combined the roles of mentor, counselor, and, at times, Dutch uncle. One of his early employees recalls how, when she found herself to be pregnant but unmarried, Max called in the father and had a conclusive heart to heart talk with him about family responsibility. Many years later, Max was concerned that a newly-hired young American wasn't acquiring French rapidly enough. Max spoke four languages and his English was sometimes hit and miss. He suggested that the young man acquire a "French Mattress" (by which he meant *maitresse*, i.e. mistress) to help him learn the language. Find-

ing the same young staffer asleep on his office couch one morning, Max benevolently made him a cup of coffee and showed him where emergency blankets and pillows were kept.

The trait for which I especially remember Max was his ability to extend trust and support. The picture of an avuncular Max sitting behind his desk, rhythmically sucking on his ubiquitous pipe with a look of mild bemusement, asking “What’s good and new?” is one familiar to all who ever worked with him.

Former RFE/RL executive Gene Sosin recalls his first meeting with Max on the Harvard Project in his book *Sparks of Liberty: An Insider’s Memoir of Radio Liberty*: “He ... impressed us with his serious, scholarly approach to problems of Soviet politics and ideology. Max was erudite, but he never quite mastered the English idiom. Some of us on the staff once made up a list of his malapropisms, including ‘that’s the way the cookie bounces,’ ‘I had it on the tip of my thumbs,’ and ‘from my vintage point.’”

Not to forget ‘dirty cheap.’

Max had his shortcomings, but he was graced by a large measure of that elusive quality called “soul.” Max was a big soul, and those who worked with him were better for having been touched by that. Max was a *Mensch*.

ROSS JOHNSON (1939–2021): Director of RFE/RL Research Institute

(Some of this material was taken from the tribute to Ross posted on RFE/RL’s website by Robert Gillette in February 2021. Used with Mr. Gillette’s permission.)

In the late 1980s, A. Ross Johnson was a Senior Analyst at the Rand Corporation and I was a panelist at the AAASS (American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies). He came up to me to introduce himself when the panel was over. From that casual meeting grew a close friendship and a rich collaboration that continued until his untimely passing in February 2021.

We first began working together when the RFE/RL Research Institute was founded in late 1990 in Munich. Ross was the founding Director of the Institute, and I was the head of MOR (Media and Opinion Research), one of the four departments that comprised the new Institute. By 1990 MOR’s research had reached a point where we were capable of plumbing new depths of public opinion in the broadcast area, and Ross was a visionary who combined a deep historical understanding of the broadcast area with a keen analytical intelligence. Reasoning that the combination of our survey product with that of the Institute’s empirical research department would open up an entirely new channel of perception in to the broadcast area, he strongly encouraged our new strategy.

Our collaboration continued after I moved to Prague in 1995 and Ross returned to Washington. Ross was now Counselor to the President of RFE/RL in Washington and, as Director of Audience and Opinion Research, I reported directly to him. In 2010, after I retired from the Radios, Ross and I co-edited a book entitled *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, which included not just contributions from Western scholars and journalists, but formerly secret documents concerning the Radios that Ross had located in official Eastern European and Soviet archives.

Another joint project was a paper on “A 21st Century Vision for U.S. Global Media” which we presented at the Woodrow Wilson Institute for International Scholars in 2012. This laid out a plan for restructuring the whole US international broadcasting effort in the challenging circumstances of the new century. We made several joint visits to Capitol Hill to meet with Congressional staffers, and appeared on five different panels at the Wilson Institute.

Ross’ interests were numerous. International broadcasting was one of his major preoccupations, but he also authored papers on Bosnia and Kosovo, and co-edited a book with former Secretary of State George P. Schultz called *Communicating with the World of Islam*. One of his major achievements was an effort to preserve the history of the Radios by setting up an archive of RFE/RL corporate records at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University. RFE/RL had never employed an organization-wide archivist or historian and had no corporate policy on the preservation of administrative records or program tapes. (The German authorities required the Radios to maintain a recorded log of all broadcasting for a few months, but the long-term preservation of audio tapes was left up to individual language services.) When the Radios moved to Prague, Ross arranged for several tons of paper archives to be shipped to Budapest to be professionally curated in what is now named the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives.

He also arranged for RFE/RL audio, script, and corporate archives to be sent to Hoover. With 10.5 million pages of documentation and 100,000 program tapes from the 1950s to 1995, plus digital records up to 2006, Hoover now holds an unrivalled resource covering half a century of communist rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and this is entirely thanks to Ross. One of the most important tapes recovered was the full, 400-hour record of RFE’s Hungarian broadcasting during the 1956 uprising, which was found, not in RFE/RL’s own holdings, but in the German federal archives in Koblenz. Although the broadcasting was at times overly emotional, the tapes made it clear that, contrary to

allegations that have persisted for over half a century, RFE neither incited the uprising nor promised American intervention in Hungary.

Ross was born in 1939 and graduated from Stanford University in 1961. He earned a Masters from the Fletcher School in Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in 1962, and a Ph.D. in political science at Columbia in 1967. His doctoral adviser was Zbigniew Brzezinski. One of his fellow-students was Madeline Albright. The subject of his dissertation was Yugoslavia. Ross spoke Serbo-Croat, Polish, German, and Russian.

After a stint as a policy adviser for RFE from 1966-69, Ross worked from 1969-1988 as a Senior Analyst of East European and Soviet politico-military affairs at the RAND Corporation. One of his former colleagues was Condoleezza Rice, who wrote, “I am saddened to learn of the passing of [a] great American... I fondly remember him as my first boss [at RAND].”

Ross rejoined RFE/RL as Director of RFE in 1988, became Director of the RFE/RL Research Institute in 1990, and then Counselor to the RFE/RL President in 1995. He was also a research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, and a senior scholar at the Wilson Center. Armed with these credentials, he obtained permission from the CIA to review the still-classified files on the origins and early history of RFE and RL, and this enabled him to write the definitive early history of the organization: *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond*, Stanford University Press, 2010.

Away from his desk, Ross was an avid skier and hiker. We went hiking together in the Swiss Alps and in the redwood forests of California. I shall miss those trips, as I shall miss our regular lunches in downtown Washington, sometimes en tête-à-tête, sometimes with other former RFE/RL colleagues such as Enders Wimbush, Beth Portale, Jeff Trimble, Bob Gillette, and Kevin Klose.

JAMES CRITCHLOW (1926–2019): Planning and Research Officer, Board for International Broadcasting

In 1965 Jim Critchlow arrived in New York to take over RL’s Public Affairs office. Our paths crossed briefly for the first time. He had been working for the Radio in Paris, and I was about to leave for Munich. He took me to lunch at Janssens, a German restaurant near the office. I ordered a beer to go with the German fare, but he abstained, saying he had already had his “life’s quota” in Paris, and if he hadn’t stopped imbibing he would have ended up sleeping under a bridge!

Jim was raised on a farm in Dutchess County, New York although he wasn’t a typical farm boy. His parents were both intellectuals and had him studying French

and German at an early age. Their home was a summer refuge for a wide variety of international folks from New York and he was exposed to a wider world from an early age, often by listening to foreign stations on short-wave radio. After graduating from MIT he took a job at General Electric but was soon bored with it and enrolled in Russian language studies at Georgetown University. That led to a job with the Atomic Energy Commission and later to a job with Radio Liberty which was in the start-up phase. He agreed to go to Munich on a short-term basis and ending staying twenty years with RL! Although different in specific details I noticed a certain similarity in Jim's long path to Radio Liberty and my own.

Jim wrote a highly entertaining account of those pioneering days in a book entitled *Radio Hole-In-The-Head – Radio Liberty: An Insider's Story of Cold War Broadcasting*, which was published by the American University Press in 1995. In mid-career he developed an interest in Central Asia, taught himself Uzbek, and in 1991 published *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty* at the Westview Press.

After leaving Radio Liberty for the Board for International Broadcasting, he was instrumental in saving Audience Research on the two occasions it was seriously threatened. Jim spent a number of years at USIA research dealing with the Communist Bloc. After retirement from government service he was affiliated with the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University.

Jim remained a good friend for the rest of his life. My last meeting with Jim was in 2017 at a restaurant in the Massachusetts port town of Newburyport where he had retired. Charlie Allen and I were attending the AAASS convention (Slavic Studies) in Boston and took a train to meet Jim for lunch. We all had fish and chips and beer. Jim had apparently found a way to extend his "quota."

MORRILL "BILL" CODY (1901–1987): Director of RL Paris Bureau

When I arrived in Paris in 1971, Bill Cody served as my mentor on the finer points of French life. (The notorious Buffalo Bill Cody was an ancestor – hence the nickname.) He tutored me in how to host business lunches in French restaurants without coming over as a gauche American (always be ten minutes early and don't forget to offer a cheese course). Bill was extremely well plugged into the French political scene and had a regular annual meeting with someone highly placed at the Elysée Palace, presumably a presidential aide. If RFE/RL and SAAOR were able to function unchallenged in the French political environment (at a time when the Parti Communiste was a force to be reckoned with), it was largely due to Bill Cody. He had started out in Paris as a US diplomat in the

1920s, when his circle of acquaintances included Hemingway and other American literary and artistic expatriates. He and Hemingway both made contributions to a book called *This Must Be the Place; Memoirs of Montparnasse* by a popular Montparnasse barman called Jimmy Charteris.

Cody was a diplomat for most of his career. He served with the United States Foreign Service for more than two decades, and was deputy director of the United States Information Agency from 1961 to 1963 under Edward R. Murrow. From 1965 to 1976 he managed the Paris bureau of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

One of his many published books, *The Favorite Restaurants of an American in Paris*, served as my dining-out guide during our first few years in Paris. Bill was never wrong in his assessments of where to eat well.

RALPH WALTER (1924–2013): RFE/RL Executive Vice-President for Programs and Policy

(Some of this material was taken from a tribute to Ralph Walter by Ross Johnson.)

In the fall of 1964, I flew to New York for a job interview with RFE. That was the first time I met Ralph Walter, and in the course of my Radio career I worked with him on and off for several years. He and I always had good personal and working relations, perhaps because we both came from Minnesota. Ralph was born in St. Paul in 1924 and enrolled at St. Olaf College, he left to serve in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946. He received B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Minnesota.

He had been with RFE since its inception. In 1951, he joined RFE's parent organization, the National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE), working in the Division for Exile Relations with East European leaders and organizations supported by the NCFE. After a series of assignments that took him back and forth between New York and Munich, he was appointed RFE Policy Director in September 1965, and became RFE Director in March 1968.

Mindful of inadequate management oversight of broadcasts to Hungary in 1956, Walter exercised strict oversight over RFE broadcasts during the 1968 Prague Spring, and again in 1970 during the Polish regime's crackdown on protests on the Baltic coast. His style of management was careful, alert, and hands-on.

In 1976, RFE merged with Radio Liberty, and Walter was appointed Executive Vice President for Programs and Policy, overseeing RL as well as RFE. Like other members of the RFE old guard, he tended to look down his nose at Radio Liberty (which, unlike RFE, did not have a pool of seasoned journalists to draw on in its early years, though that changed later). Initially Walter believed that our

Audience Research operation should be moved back to Munich, but ultimately conceded that it was better to leave us in Paris. In the late 1970s, he briskly solved several issues of staffing and location that had been bedevilling us, politely declined Max Ralis' request to push back his retirement (as an upright and serious Midwesterner he had never been at ease with Max's convoluted style), and gave me a vote of confidence to expand and restructure the office.

But his days were numbered. In 1982, when BIB Chairman Frank Shakespeare installed a new hardline conservative management team, Walter left RFE/RL after 31 years of service. In an interview for a Polish TV documentary about RFE/RL, recorded a year before his death, Ralph Walter relates how proud he was to have been associated with RFE/RL, and how glad he was to have witnessed a future he had worked for but never expected to see – a Europe whole and free.

JAMES BUCKLEY (B. 1923): President RFE/RL

Of all the Presidents I served under, none was more supportive of Audience Research than Jim Buckley. In 1982, when I heard of his appointment, I greeted the announcement with trepidation. Knowing his reputation as a conservative hardliner, I was afraid he would steer RFE/RL in a strongly ideological direction. But in the event my fears were groundless. Jim Buckley was an intelligent pragmatist who served RFE/RL well. Our political views diverged on many points, but he and I were on the same page in the East-West struggle. His support of SAAOR never faltered, even when we came under attack from both inside and outside the organization.

Jim was a pleasure to spend time with. His wry sense of humor came to the fore one day when we were in his office overlooking the Englischer Garten. This was where the Germans liked to go on sunny days to swim in the nude and sunbathe, and the stream that flowed under Jim's windows was much sought-out. Seeing a flock of young ladies running past in their birthday suits, Jim raised his hands in the air and asked, grinning broadly, "How is anyone supposed to get any work done here!"

In early 1985, Jim announced that he would be leaving at the end of the year, after completing the three years that he had agreed to. His selflessness gave the organization time to find a qualified replacement, but it put him in a lame duck situation for the rest of the year. After leaving RFE/RL, he was appointed to the Washington, DC, Court of Appeals and served as a senior judge until his retirement in 1996. At the time of this writing (fall 2021), he is 98 years old.

EUGENE PELL (1937–2020): President RFE/RL

(Some of this material was derived from a tribute published by Robert Gillette on the RFE/RL website in 2020. Used with the author's permission.)

I met Gene Pell when he was Director of Voice of America and SAAOR was supplying VOA with audience research data. He invited me into his office when I was visiting VOA in Washington. In the course of our chat, he expressed his gratitude for SAAOR data, and for our collaboration with VOA.

A few years later, he became President of RFE/RL. Gene's attitude to audience research stayed entirely positive, though he occasionally expressed doubts about the wisdom of our attempts to work more closely with organizations such as RISC and Agorametrie. His concept of audience research was more basic. Who listens to the radio? When do they listen? What do they listen to? How can we improve our broadcasts? Despite his reservations, Gene never seriously attempted to curtail our efforts to develop a broader socio-political understanding of the broadcast area and its post-Communist transition. He and I maintained a cordial working relationship until he left the Radios shortly before their move to Prague.

Gene presided over RFE/RL during a time of great change. In 1989, the Soviet satellite states collapsed one by one like dominos; in 1990, a wave of unrest swept through the Soviet national republics; and in 1991 the hardliners' putsch attempt led directly to the collapse of the USSR. Gene never failed to rise to the occasion. In December 1989, when violence erupted in Romania and the Ceausescu fled Bucharest, he ordered a million watts of shortwave power from RFE/RL's transmitter stations across Europe to be diverted to the Romanian service. Before long, Romanian army commanders seeking to restore calm established phone contact with the Romanian service in Munich. In 1991, after the Soviet collapse, Gene found the resources to open press bureaus across the region and begin on-the-spot reporting by talented local journalists. A few years later, during the Bosnian war, he persuaded the US government to allow broadcasts to the former Yugoslavia.

WILLIAM W. MARSH (1932–2014): Executive Vice-President RFE/RL

Until Audience Research was incorporated into the RFE/RL Research Institute in 1990, Bill Marsh, as Executive Vice-President of the Radios, was my immediate superior. Although he was initially skeptical as to how we managed to obtain such detailed listener comments in such difficult interviewing conditions, once the process was explained to him, he accepted that it was possible. We had regu-

lar, always cordial meetings when I visited Munich. When the office moved from Boulevard Saint Germain to Rue Eugène Flachet, he made a special trip to Paris to sign the rental papers on behalf of RFE/RL.

A graduate of Brandeis University, Bill had worked for many years in Germany before joining RFE/RL. He had a German wife, spoke perfect German, and was a great fan of the tennis star, Steffi Graf. He was a certified translator from the German language, and had had a long career in international broadcasting, including spells at VOA, RIAS (Radio in the American Sector of Berlin), and AFN in Frankfurt (American Forces' Network). His resumé also included ABC News and the *Washington Post*.

In October 1986, Bill was hired by Gene Pell as part of a drive to "professionalize" the Radios. He was the ideal man for the job. It would be difficult to find a more professional radio newsman than Bill Marsh. It was thanks to his efforts that the Radios were able to respond with such skill and proficiency to the upheavals in the broadcast region at the end of the decade.

Bill took over briefly as President of RFE/RL, when Gene Pell left the Radios in 1993. However, he opposed the upcoming move to Prague, and took retirement from the Radios in 1994. Bill's view was that the Radios had accomplished their mission and should wind up operations with pride and dignity in Munich.

2. Eminent Russian Visitors to SAAOR's Paris Office

VIKTOR NEKRASOV (1911–1987)

(Contributed by Charlie Allen)

Viktor Platonovich Nekrasov was born in Kiev in 1911, and spent his early years in Paris, where his mother worked as a doctor, living in an apartment near the Parc Montsouris. The family returned to Kiev on the outbreak of war, Viktor Platonovich took a degree in architecture, and worked as an actor and set designer with the Kiev Russian Drama Theater until 1941. During World War II he served in the Red Army, and won the Stalin Prize in 1947 for a book describing his experiences, *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*. His later work became markedly anti-Stalinist, and after numerous protest actions against the Brezhnev regime, he was forced to emigrate to Paris in 1974, remaining there until his death in 1987. His books include *Kira Georgievna*, *The Home Town*, and the autobiographical *Notes of a Bystander* (*Zapiski zevaki*).

When I joined SAAOR in October 1980, I was thrilled to learn that the writer Viktor Nekrasov often stopped by the office. Max Ralis, who headed SAAOR at the time, was a close friend of Nekrasov and offered to introduce me to the renowned novelist. I eagerly accepted, though I was a bit uneasy about the prospect. Given his life story, I assumed that Nekrasov would be a tough character.

Our first conversation shattered my assumptions. Nekrasov exuded a gentleness which I did not associate with a war writer turned “enemy of the people”. There was nothing intimidating about him. His moustache and thin face conveyed an old world refinement which did not match my image of a sapper from the battle of Stalingrad. Nekrasov’s soothing voice and manner of speaking – his Russian flowed in a melodic, Southern lilt – immediately put me at ease. A former actor, he enunciated each word clearly.

It was clear that he was not affluent. His dusty loafers and worn leather jacket suggested a less than robust clothing budget. The jacket reeked of cigarette smoke. The wrinkles on his face, as well as his yellow, cigarette-stained index and middle fingers, hinted at a full social life.

Our discussion initially touched on predictable topics. Where had I studied Russian? When had I arrived in France? Nekrasov was almost 45 years my senior (69 versus 25), and the survivor of tribulations far beyond anything I could imagine. Yet he treated me seriously and politely. The conversation moved round to the US Presidential election, which was to be held in a few days. I asked Nekrasov if he had a preference between Carter and Reagan. He glanced at me sternly and asked, “Which one hates the USSR more?”

“Undoubtedly Reagan,” I answered.

“Then I am for Reagan.”

That first encounter exposed me to the qualities which made Nekrasov a legendary broadcaster for RL. In a few minutes he had managed to put me at ease, earn my respect, and define a moral benchmark. And all of this was communicated in clear, flowing Russian. Little wonder that our focus groups singled out Nekrasov’s broadcasts for the excellence of their delivery and the impact of their content. Listeners felt themselves to be in the presence of a good and thoughtful man. In Paris he managed, almost uniquely, to stay out of the political crossfires of the emigration while cultivating his influence as a writer and commentator. The only analogous Western figure might be Alistair Cooke, whose BBC program *Letter from America* conveyed a similar mix of warmth and insight.

After Max retired in the summer of 1981, Nekrasov continued to stop by the office, and his visits enriched our lives. It’s rare to meet a person of genuine integ-

rity with such an appetite for life. He tended to appear in the late afternoon or early evening, often after a stop at the Escorial café, down the road from the office. He greeted everyone and treated us all with respect. When asked, he willingly signed copies of his books. Occasionally he would recruit a drinking partner.

In the fall of 1981 he turned up with a friend, Volodya Zagreb, and they declared their intention of removing a large map of the USSR that hung on one wall of the office that had previously been Max's and was now Nicole's. They had clearly stopped for refreshments along the way. The two of them teetered on ladders for a good fifteen minutes while they tried to remove nails with hammers. The map clung to the wall, though it began to sag. Our handymen were unfazed. Abandoning any pretense of removing the map, they shifted into performance mode instead. Their language became increasingly spicy while, hammers still in hand, they shoved at each other playfully and traded accusations of stupidity and incompetence.

By now it was early evening and most people had gone home. Nicole saved the day, and probably prevented an accident, by inviting us all home for dinner. After dinner, her husband Michel offered to drive Nekrasov home, and Nekrasov told Michel to take him to the Kremlin. Michel assumed he meant the south-eastern Paris suburb of Le Kremlin-Bicêtre and drove him there. When they arrived, it turned out that Nekrasov lived in Vanves, to the south-west... Nekrasov might have lived physically in France, but his heart was still in his homeland. The pain of exile never faded.

ANDREI SINYAVSKY (1925–1997)

Andrei Sinyavsky was the father of the twentieth-century Soviet dissident movement. In February 1966, he and another writer, Yuli Daniel, went on trial for denouncing the Communist regime in books smuggled abroad and published under pen names. Sinyavsky's pseudonym was Abram Tertz. The real Abram Tertz was a Jewish gangster from Russia's past, but Sinyavsky himself was not a Jew. His father, Donat Sinyavsky, was a Russian nobleman from Syzran (in the Samara region), who became a Social Revolutionary and was arrested several times after the Revolution as an "enemy of the people". His mother was of Russian peasant stock.

In his youth, Sinyavsky was a protégé of Boris Pasternak, and he delivered a graveside eulogy at Pasternak's burial in 1960. In 1965, he and his friend Yuli Daniel were arrested and tried in the infamous Sinyavsky-Daniel show trial, which received wide coverage in the Western press. Sinyavsky was sentenced to seven years in the camps on charges of "anti-Soviet agitation" as retribution for the opin-

ions of his fictional characters. In the Soviet Union, the trial was accompanied by a harsh propaganda campaign. The era of the Khrushchev Thaw was over.

Sinyavsky was released from the Gulag in 1971, and in 1973 he and his wife, Maria Rozanova, were allowed to emigrate to France. They settled in the Paris suburb of Fontenay-aux-Roses, and began to put out a Russian-language journal called *Sintaksis*. Sinyavsky became a professor of Russian literature, and was an active contributor to Radio Liberty. He and his wife were frequent visitors to the SAAOR office while Max was still working. When he left, their visits dropped off, but they were regular attendees at our Russian New Year parties, favoring whisky over vodka, like many of the other emigrés. In between times, Maria made frequent use of our copy machine to reproduce voluminous stacks of paper, the contents of which she never shared with us. SAAOR was apparently an unofficial outpost of the Sinyavsky publishing empire. The Sinyavsky papers are now in the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University.

3. Encounters in the Field

VICTOR GRAYEVSKY (1925–2007): The Man Who Touched History

When I met Victor Grayevsky in the early 1980s, he was director of the Israeli International broadcasting company Kol Israel, but as a young man in Poland he had made a historic contribution to world events. Grayevsky never worked for SAAOR, unlike the other people profiled in this section, but he pulled serious strings for us on more than one occasion.

He was born Victor Spielman in Krakow in 1925. A week before Germany invaded Poland, the Spielman family fled to the Soviet Union, but were exiled to Siberia. From there, they moved to Kazakhstan, where Victor graduated from high school. In 1946 he returned to Warsaw and studied journalism at the Academy of Political Science. Later he worked for the Polish news agency PAP, joined the Communist Party, and changed his surname to the more Polish-sounding Grayevsky. In 1949 his parents and sister moved to Israel, but he stayed in Poland, and became a senior editor for the department of PAP that dealt with the Soviet Union. He became a Zionist in 1955 after a visit to his family in Israel, and moved to Israel in 1957.

Shortly before leaving Poland, he played a pivotal role in a major Cold War event. In 1956, Nikita Khrushchev was due to address the CPSU's Twentieth Party Congress. A few days before the Congress, Grayevsky happened to visit his

girlfriend, Lucia Baranowski, the wife of Poland's deputy prime minister, at the Warsaw headquarters of the Polish Communist Party. Lucia worked as a secretary for Edward Ochab, the Party leader. On her desk, Grayevsky spotted a thick booklet with a red binding entitled *The 20th Party Congress: The Speech of Comrade Khrushchev*. It was one of a few top-secret copies sent by Moscow to leaders of the East Bloc countries. Despite the risk, Lucia allowed Grayevsky to take the booklet away to read for a couple of hours. He took it straight to the Israeli embassy where it was photocopied by the Shin Bet (the Israeli security agency), and later passed on to the CIA.

The speech ran to 26,000 words. Delivered on February 25, 1956 to a closed session of the Congress, it was nothing less than a condemnation of Stalin's reign of terror. It was the first official Soviet admission of the horrors perpetrated under Stalin, and it provided a unique insight into the workings of the Soviet leadership. Grayevsky said he had acted in accordance with his newly-acquired Zionist convictions. Apparently he was never suspected of leaking the document to the West. He left for Israel the following year.

His path on arrival was smoothed by Shin Bet, who helped him find an apartment and two jobs: one as director of the the Polish-language service of Kol Israel, and one in the Eastern European division of the Foreign Ministry (an exceptional posting for a new immigrant from a communist country). Meanwhile, he made the acquaintance of some Soviet diplomats and their wives, and this ultimately led to an approach from the KGB. He immediately informed the Shin Bet of this, was told to play along, and functioned as a double agent feeding disinformation to the Soviets for several years. In 1967, after the Six-Day War, the Soviet Union severed diplomatic relations with Israel. At his final meeting with his KGB handler, Grayevsky was told he had been awarded the Lenin Medal of Excellence in recognition of the "great work" he had done for the Soviet Union. The medal would be kept for him in Moscow. He never collected it.

(Some of the details in this account are drawn from Shlomo Shpiro, "KGB Human Intelligence Operations in Israel, 1948-1973" Intelligence and National Security 26:6, pp. 864-885, which provides additional information on Victor Grayevsky's work as a double agent for the Israelis against the KGB. See also Haaretz, "Our Man in the KGB," October 5, 2006. The leak of the secret speech was covered in the Washington Post of March 27, 1994, "The Leak of the Century: How the West got Khrushchev's Secret Denunciation of Stalin," by Yossi Melman and Dan Raviv; and the Jerusalem Post of November 17, 1996, "The Man Who Touched History" by Abraham Rabinovich.)

IRINA ALBERTI (1924–2000): The Russian Emigré Intellectual

Irina Ilovaiskaya Alberti was the first coordinator of our Rome interviewing project in the 1970s. The project was aimed at emigrants who had chosen not to move to Israel and who were in Rome awaiting passage to a third country. Irina had access to the list of arrivals through HIAS (the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), which helped to process these emigrants. She generally had a couple of interviewers working for her. She supervised their work and forwarded it to us in Paris. At that time, the Italian postal service was so unreliable that she used to mail the questionnaires from the Vatican.

Irina was born in Yugoslavia in 1924 to Russian parents who had emigrated after the Revolution. Her father was from Moscow and her mother from Kiev. Her youth in Yugoslavia and her desperate attempts to reach Italy at the end of the war are recounted in moving detail in her memoir, *L'Exil et la Solitude*. After narrowly escaping forced repatriation to the Soviet Union, Irina and her mother found themselves stuck in Austria for a year before they could enter Italy, where she was finally reunited with her fiancée, an Italian diplomat. Irina and her husband subsequently lived in Prague (where they witnessed the communist takeover), Austria, Venezuela, Germany, and France. In 1973, her husband suffered a heart attack, and they returned to Rome, where he died two years later.

Despite her years in Yugoslavia and Italy, Irina was first and foremost a Russian. When the dissident Pavel Litvinov was expelled from the USSR in 1974, he met Irina in Rome. She recounted to Max Ralis with some pride that he had complimented her on her pure literary Russian. Irina visited Alexander Solzhenitsyn in Zurich, at his invitation, and in 1976, when he moved to Vermont, she joined him as his literary assistant and translator. She left Vermont three years later, and moved to Paris to become Chief Editor of the well-known and highly-regarded Russian-language newspaper *Russkaya mysl'* (*Russian Thought*). Banned in the USSR for its coverage of dissidents and publication of samizdat, *Russkaya mysl'* was able to open its own office in Moscow in 1993 after the fall of communism.

Irina died in 2000. In Rome, a street is named after her.

HELMUT AIGNER: The Pursuit of Excellence

(contributed by Charlie Allen)

Helmut Aigner was the director of an Austrian survey research company called Intora Marktforschung, which began to work with SAAOR in the early 1980s. Intora was based in Vienna, a major crossroads for travelers from all Eastern European countries, including the USSR, and had considerable experience inter-

viewing East Europeans. Intora was keen to work with Soviet travelers, and we were anxious to expand our sample. It was the perfect alliance.

Aigner was a man of high intelligence in pursuit of excellence. Although he was a native Viennese, his rumpled pants and awkward gait made him look out of place in an urban setting. His curly hair was streaked with gray, and his eyes, gleaming brightly behind metal glasses, constantly darted from side to side. He tended to be taciturn, but when he did speak, despite his non-native English, it was clear that he was tracking every aspect of an issue.

Aigner was a detail person with a penchant for challenging assumptions. He assessed the suitability of people and methods for the project rigorously, and didn't hesitate to move the needle. His staccato English gave his raw candor added impact. He was relentless. If a proposed change did not make sense he would dismiss it as "stupid" (the u pronounced as in "stuck"). He told me that they had made him repeat a year in school because he corrected his teachers too much.

It was thanks to Aigner that SAAOR achieved a major breakthrough in interviewing techniques. An idea came to him in the middle of the night: Postcards! He realized that interviews with Soviet travelers could be conducted openly using a set of postcards depicting Viennese monuments. One side of the card would show a palace, while the other would contain questions on stations and programming. The questions could be posed and the answers written down with no bulky questionnaire to attract attention. Respondents would know that a structured interview was taking place, but would not feel themselves endangered.

Intora was also the first institute to issue interviewers with pagers so that they could signal to the office that an interview was taking place. An observer was then sent off to watch the conversation. Often this was Aigner's wife Christine. Sometimes I too showed up to observe an interview. Once when I appeared unexpectedly in a crowded café, the interviewer was so startled that he spilled his coffee. The respondent asked if everything was OK. "No problem," replied the interviewer, unfazed. "Still recovering from that late night out."

Aigner employed only East Europeans to interview Soviet citizens. They all spoke acceptable Russian but with a distinct accent. This was not a handicap but an advantage. Aigner's own lack of Russian was never an impediment; he tracked his people and their work untiringly. When I reviewed the interviewers' work with them in Russian, sitting round a table in Aigner's office, he would silently observe the discussion from behind his desk, his wolf-like eyes darting back and forth like a laser beam. Once, when the session was over, and the interviewers had left, he said to me, "I could tell you were pushing Marina to obtain more open

comments on programming. I have told her she does not pursue this enough. It is clear from the questionnaires that this is her biggest weakness.” Aigner was right: I had brought up precisely this topic, and Marina had been visibly uncomfortable when we discussed possible corrective actions.

When I complimented Aigner on his team’s responsiveness to my questions and comments at the meeting, he retorted: “Mr. Allen, of course they take you seriously. You are a Midwestern guy speaking fluent Russian. Please, what US government agency do you think they assume you work for?”

CHRISTOPHER GELEKLIDIS (D. 2006) THE FIXER

(contributed by Charlie Allen)

Christopher Geleklidis was our institute director in Athens. Greece was a major interviewing site for SAAOR. A significant outflow of Soviet Greeks had taken place under Brezhnev in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of them had grown up in Central Asia. In 1980 it was estimated that there were between 10,000 and 20,000 recently-arrived Soviet Greeks living in greater Athens (precise numbers were elusive). A large number of Soviet travelers came on tourist and commercial ships to Athens and the adjacent port of Piraeus. A steady flow of individual tourists came to visit family members. Athens was full of Russian bakeries, gift shops, and bookstores, not to mention the Orthodox Cathedral and the small church in Piraeus.

But these favorable conditions were of no avail without one crucial ingredient: a man on the ground to run the interviewing operation. That man was Christopher Geleklidis. With a stoutness of purpose and an unmatched energy level, Geleklidis built one of SAAOR’s most robust sampling points.

Geleklidis had grown up in Ukraine, where his father perished in the Stalinist purges. After the Second World War he ended up in Greece as part of the second (postwar) wave of emigration. Deeply anti-Soviet, he was involved for a while in a program that distributed books to Soviet travelers and sailors. When the military junta was in power between 1967 and 1974, he was mistaken for a Soviet sympathizer and severely beaten up. By the time I met him in the 1980s, the junta and the book distribution work were distant memories and he was operating as an old-fashioned fixer. He ran a translation business from an office overlooking the port of Piraeus. Greek residents and Soviet visitors came to ask his advice on visa applications and request translations to and from Russian and Greek. His office was a safe harbor for friends, clients, and travelers. He used to get snacks and hot drinks brought up to his fourth-floor lair from the café on the ground

floor of the building. A bottle of vodka or Metaxa (Greek brandy) was produced from the filing cabinet as required.

Christopher was in his element in Piraeus, confidently twirling a traditional Greek string of beads as he sauntered around the port. With his distinctive swagger and penetrating voice you knew when he was in the vicinity. He lumbered along with a determined stride. His steely gaze radiated intensity. Virtually deaf in his left ear, he communicated at half a dozen different decibel levels starting with loud. His Russian was an odd brew of Ukrainianisms and rural idioms, but his Greek was apparently excellent. The rotary telephone in his office had a long cord which he pulled over from his bad ear on the left to his good ear on the right when taking a call. It seemed likely that he might someday strangle himself while yanking the cord across his body and under his chin, but I never dared to ask why he didn't just move the telephone to the other side of the desk.

Despite his ferocious anti-Communism, he was careful during interviews to keep his political views to himself so as not to frighten or influence a respondent. He was deeply committed to gathering accurate data on Western radio listening. When we needed more interviewers, he recruited a number of qualified Greeks from Central Asia from varied backgrounds who overlooked Christopher's eccentricities and adopted his devotion to the project.

One day when he was not expecting me, I knocked on the door and went in and found a man sitting in the visitor's chair chatting away with Christopher in Russian. A cognac glass, drained of most of its light brown contents, stood in front of him. With an emphatic wave of his right arm, Christopher signaled that I was to wait in the corridor. I could hear them discussing VOA broadcasts through the wall. They moved on to Deutsche Welle (the man did not listen) and RL (he mentioned Dovlatov and Nekrasov). Ten minutes later the visitor took his leave and I was ushered in. "It's good you were able to see a pretty typical office interview," observed Christopher.

When Christopher retired, shortly before the Soviet collapse, he and I remained in occasional contact. But in 2006, I called his home after a long hiatus, and an unfamiliar female voice answered. It was Christopher's niece. She told me he had died two weeks earlier. His wife Nina had preceded him in death by a year and a half.

STEEN SAUERBERG (B. 1942)? THE QUIET DANE

(contributed by Charlie Allen)

Steen Sauerberg was the director of the Communication and Opinion Research institute in Copenhagen, one of our main sampling points. At first glance Steen

might seem an improbable person to oversee our project. He spoke no Russian and had no personal connection with the USSR or Eastern Europe. He was very Danish. His apartment in the center of Copenhagen, where he held monthly meetings with the interviewing team, had the patina of the Scandinavian intelligentsia. The artwork, the furniture, even the office in the apartment conveyed an aura of refinement and erudition. At Sauerberg's place the interviewers felt themselves in an unfamiliar context that undoubtedly encouraged them to listen more and say less.

Soviet tourist traffic in Copenhagen was heavy, and we had a vast pool of skilled Russian-speaking interviewers to draw on. But without Steen's sense of structure and professionalism we would not have got very far. Sauerberg was a professor at the University of Copenhagen, and an expert on public opinion who spoke frequently on Danish radio and television and contributed articles to Danish newspapers and academic publications. The interviewers took this on board. He ran very organized meetings which followed an established format and respected strict time limits. If a SAAOR representative was present, he would yield the microphone, but still get his own points across. He reviewed questionnaires with each interviewer and made sure that they got any personal feedback from our office. He checked in with us regularly to determine how the Copenhagen data compared with that received from other sampling points. He consistently provided helpful input on matters to do with methodology and data collection.

His calm Scandinavian temperament also served to soothe the vehement personal disputes that occasionally arose between some of the ex-Soviet interviewers. More than once he had to summon the warring parties to a mediation session. One interviewer accused a colleague of disrupting his interviews. Another accused someone of poisoning the team's esprit de corps. Sauerberg's dispassionate, matter-of-fact approach to conflict resolution ensured that the conflicts were overcome and the project continued on an even keel.

The Interviewer's Tale

(translated from the Russian and edited by Charlie Allen. The writer asked to not be identified by name.)

I arrived in Denmark from the USSR in 1981 and started interviewing Soviet travelers to Copenhagen about their Western radio listening habits soon afterwards. I had no doubts that we were going to find people who listened to Western radio. At the beginning of the 60s, I had served in a unit specializing in technical espionage which listened to NATO and US military radio communications.

When they got back to the barracks, the soldiers always talked about the broadcasts. Most of them were rural kids who spent several hours each day glued to receivers. The appearance in the early 1960s of the short-wave Spidola receiver made it possible for the general public to listen to Western radio stations.

Copenhagen is a port, and if you want to socialize with Soviet travelers you need to get to know your way around the harbor. Interviewers tracked the arrival of Soviet vessels, and shared the information with each other. We mainly targeted tourists and sailors. The challenge was to engage them in a confidential conversation.

I used a variety of methods to do this, presenting myself variously as an employee in a trading office, a writer on a business trip, or occasionally a sailor who had defected. Whatever the situation, I made it clear that I wanted to catch up with people from my homeland.

Soviet travelers typically explore foreign cities in groups of three. One person is designated as the leader. It was helpful to identify that person and to interest him, and the others, in chatting. I always carried round an assortment of souvenirs, books from non-Soviet publishing houses, and a flask of whiskey.

Wherever possible, I tried to get them drinking. In Russia, this usually creates the right conditions for uninhibited conversation. I would often invite them to a café, or to the library of the Russian church, to which I had permanent access. I would give them practical tips such as where to buy things for their families with the pitifully small amount of money they were allowed to convert to Danish kroner. I would then remark on how little Soviet people knew about life in the West. Often they reacted indignantly by saying they knew all about current events and did not need any input from me. I would respond, "How can that be?" and this generally led into a conversation about Western radio stations, which enabled me to ask the right questions to get the information we needed. Naturally, I knew the questionnaire by heart.

I conducted interviews for several years. Some of them were amusing, and some were sad. An ardent Party member from Sverdlovsk (now Ekaterinburg) got seriously drunk in a Chinese restaurant, and admitted to listening constantly to numerous Western radio stations. When we had discussed all the points in the questionnaire, he asked, "Now what will happen to me?" A traveler from Leningrad told me he had accidentally come across Deutsche Welle. He had never even heard of it before, and was convinced that he was the station's only listener. When I said that might not be the case, he got very upset. Thinking he had discovered something exotic and possibly risky, he was extremely put out to learn that he was not the pioneer he had imagined.

Toward the end of the Soviet era, travelers became much easier to interview. The fear which the regime had cultivated for 70 years was disappearing. As the dissident Vladimir Bukovsky said in an interview shortly before his death, the role which free information played in the collapse of the “empire of evil” should not be underestimated. It was an honor for me to serve Western radio as an interviewer.

The MIT Connection and Computer Simulation¹

SAAOR/MOR's debt to Professor Ithiel de Sola Pool is enormous. Professor and founding chair of MIT's Political Science Department, Prof. de Sola Pool was a pioneer in multiple areas, including in the application of computer simulation techniques to social science survey data and laying the foundations for the analysis of what are now known as social networks. An additional discussion of his work appears at the end of this Appendix. As noted in the narrative portion of this book, his work provided the first estimates of the size of audiences to Western radio broadcasters to the USSR, including Radio Liberty. These pioneering audience estimates were based on survey data gathered by SAAOR or RFE/RL.

Prof. de Sola Pool developed these methods as part of a larger program in Political Communications at the MIT Center for International Studies, with funding from USIA. This component was named the Communist Communications Project, commonly called "COMCOM". Reports on the activities and findings of this project are listed in the bibliography.

One major output of COMCOM was a simulation of the reach, audience, and impact of cross-border mass media, particularly international broadcasting into the former Soviet Union.² The first phase of that simulation — estimating the characteristics of the actual Soviet audience from very fragmentary information — was adapted to SAAOR's needs and explained in some detail in an article that Prof. de Sola Pool, Dr. John C Klensin (at the time Principal Research Scientist at MIT), and I wrote that was published in the peer-reviewed academic

1 The author is indebted to John Klensin, Ph.D. and Ree Dawson, Ph.D. for their valuable inputs to this appendix.

2 John C. Klensin and J. D. Nagle, *Mass Media Simulation User's Manual*, MIT Center for International Studies C/693 (1969).

journal *Communication Research* in 1982. Relevant highlights from that article appear below. The key computational component of that process was derived from suggestions by Prof. Frederick Mosteller, then Professor of Statistics at Harvard. His suggestion was, in turn, a variation on the Iterative Proportional Fit procedure described by Deming and Stephan (1940). Discussions continued after the procedure had been adapted into the Mass Media Simulation and he described the problem and issues in a paper (“Association and Estimation in Contingency Tables” (1968)). Derivations of the technique for other than data synthesis have been fundamental to several important developments in statistics in recent decades, most notably the work on multidimensional categorical data analysis.³ In honor of that contribution, that process became known within the project as “Mostellerization”.

The following simplified description of the “Mostellerization” algorithm is taken from the aforementioned article in *Communication Research*.⁴

“Mostellerization”

“We have now stated our problem: how to make estimates from a sample of very uneven reliability with an uneven sampling rate across strata, given that we cannot correct the deficiencies in the field. We will next describe some of the procedures adopted to deal with these difficulties.

“We shall explain the procedure with reference to one of the applications that will come up repeatedly during the discussion of the simulation: the question of estimating underlying data from the aggregated results. This is an issue that arises when the researcher is not in command of the source data but is compelled to draw inferences from what is reported. It affects historians and other social scientists doing secondary analysis from published reports and is a particularly salient problem for a researcher making intelligent inferences about a society from which free research is not allowed.

“Often the inference problem is that of estimating cell values from marginals. For the sake of simplicity, let us consider a two-dimensional table, even though every-

3 See Y. M. M. Bishop, S. E. Fienberg, and P.W. Holland, *Discrete Multivariate Analysis: Theory and Practice*. (MIT Press, 1975).

4 See R. Eugene Parta, John C. Klensin, and Ithiel de Sola Pool, “The Shortwave Audience in the USSR: Methods for Improving the Estimates,” *Communication Research* (October 1982): 581–606. Reprinted with permission from Sage Publications, Inc. which “green lights” reproduction of an author’s works printed by Sage.

thing we have to say extends to any N dimensions. Suppose we have information that, in a given population, the age distribution is 30% young, 50% middle-aged, and 20% old. While the sex distribution is 50% male and 50% female. The problem here is how to estimate the values in the six cells. First, we present a dummy table with just the input data we have been given.

	Male	Female	Total
Young			30%
Middle			50%
Old			20%
Total	50%	50%	

“The most obvious procedure would be to calculate the cross products—that is, to assume that the age distribution for men and woman is the same. The resulting table would look like this:

	Male	Female	Total
Young	15%	15%	30%
Middle	25%	25%	50%
Old	10%	10%	20%
Total	50%	50%	

That would clearly be a bad estimate. We know that women live longer than men; this means that more than half the old people should be women. The problem is to arrive at estimates that allow us to take account of known correlations within the data; in this case, correlations of age with sex.

“We shall explain the Mostellerization alternative for those not familiar with the iterative proportional fit algorithm by using the simplest possible case, a two-by-two table. Let us distinguish three kinds of numbers: input numbers that we take as initial estimates but are ready to modify if they seem implausible; and derived numbers that are outputs of the estimation procedure. Now let us apply these to a four-cell table:

		0.5
		0.5
0.4	0.6	

“If we take these marginals as fixed and simply calculate cross-products, the estimated values in the table become:

0.2	0.3	0.5
0.2	0.3	0.5
0.4	0.6	

“Suppose, however, that we know for sure that the correct value in the upper lefthand corner is 0.1 and not 0.2. What happens then? In a four-cell table, that additional information determines all the rest of the values. The table becomes:

0.1	0.4	0.5
0.3	0.2	0.5
0.4	0.6	

In that table there is a marked correlation between the row and column variables.

“Now let us consider the case where we have reason to believe there is such a correlation but we have no sure information about any particular cell value. If we can introduce a correlational bias of some kind, we will get a better estimate than the cross-product. However, the initial estimates of any cell value should not be treated as hard data. This is where the Mostellerization procedure comes in. Initial estimates are entered, and if they are mutually inconsistent, they are modified by an iterative procedure until a consistent set is produced. It should, however, be noted that wherever we do not supply some other estimate, the initial estimate is the cross-product. Thus, in the next version of the same four-cell table, we will assume that we estimate the initial value in the upper lefthand cell to be 0.1. But that we have no other estimates to provide for any other cell:

0.1		0.5
		0.5
0.4	0.6	

“The computer program will first calculate the cross-products and enter them into the other cells:

0.1	0.3	0.5
0.2	0.3	0.5
0.4	0.6	

“Clearly, that is wrong: the cell values add up only to 0.9 instead of 1.0. The program has to start modifying these initial estimates to make them consistent with the marginals, which we have here assumed to be fixed and certain numbers. The first iteration, modifying the cell values, renormalizes them to conform to the row totals. We have to raise the values in the first row by $5/4$. That gives us a table in which the cell values total 1.0 and conform to the row totals.

0.125	0.375	0.5
0.2	0.3	0.5
1.4/	1.6/	

“However, the cell values are now inconsistent with the column totals. So on the next iteration, we modify them again to make them consistent with the column totals. We normalize the first column by multiplying the values in it by $.4/.325$ and we normalize the second column by multiplying the values in it by $.6/.675$. The result is the following table:

0.1538	0.3333	0.4871	1.5/
0.2462	0.2667	0.5129	1.5/
1.4/	1.6/		

“Now the row totals are wrong again, but as one can see, the results are rapidly converging to an acceptable solution. We will normalize the row totals once more: for row one multiplying by $.5/.4871$, and for row two by $.5/.5129$. The result is:

0.1538	0.3422	0.5
0.24	0.26	0.5
0.3978	0.6022	
1.4/	1.6/	

“One more iteration, correcting the column totals, would bring the table almost to a solution:

0.1578	0.3409	0.4996	/5/
0.2413	0.2591	0.5005	/5/
0.4	0.6		

“We need not here consider further complications, such as those that arise when one has differential confidence in different initial estimates, or when marginals rather than cell values are problematic. The important point is that one can introduce estimates of structures within the data and have those taken into account along with the cross-product calculations.

“The technique was first used to construct a structured population model of the USSR. The population model, in turn, was used to weight our sample and taken as a base for listening computations.”

The Population Model of the USSR

The population model for the simulation was developed in several stages. The first model was based on Soviet census data for 1970 and consisted of 240 demographic cells.⁵ The classifications used were as follows: Education (2), Age (3), Gender (2), Rural/Urban Residence (2), Geographic region (10). This was updated in 1977 to reflect population gain and expanded to 480 cells by including communist party membership (2). Over the course of time we developed several population models for different applications. For public opinion questions we developed a model of 240 cells for the urban educated (secondary or higher education) where the database was strongest and where we were most interested in measuring public opinion. Here we excluded those with less than a secondary education but included Communist Party membership. Later we applied another model to measure the “core audience” listening trends on a quarterly basis. This 60-cell model included the dimensions of Age (3), Gender (2), Education (1), Urban Residence (1), Geographic region (10). It included those segments of the population where the main audience to foreign broadcasts were found and where our data samples were strongest. This approach lessened the risk of fluctuations in audience estimates caused by chance listening among groups which had large referent populations but which were considerably under-represented in our data (such as

⁵ This model was later updated when 1980 census data became available.

elderly, uneducated rural women). These quarterly estimates were provided by our then MIT-based consulting statistician, Dr. Ree Dawson.

Computation of Listener or Attitudinal Estimates

Listener estimates were computed using the same “Mostellerization” algorithm to make estimates of underlying cell data from aggregated listenership figures. The first step would be to simulate a multi-dimensional 24 or 48 cell demographic input table of listening counts for the population being studied, be it the entire adult population, the adult urban population, or the adult urban educated population. For the 24 cell table this would be broken down by age, education, gender, and rural/urban residence. The 48 cell table would include Communist Party membership. As we didn’t find that Party membership had a significant impact on foreign radio listening (although it may have at an earlier time when Stalin was in power), party members were as apt to listen as non-party members, we used a 24 cell table to derive listening estimates. Party membership, however, could be an important variable in opinion questions and would generally be included in deriving estimates of public opinion.

To compute the geographic distribution of the audience, information on listening by education at all levels in each region was entered into the simulation. However, a direct calculation of ratings in each cell was undesirable due to the relatively small samples of the population in some regions. Here we preferred to use an intermediate level of aggregation, which involved tabulating how the listening pattern of the educated population in the sample differed from region to region, and how educated persons differed from uneducated persons overall, and inferring the interaction. The estimated listening behavior of the uneducated population in a given geographic region was therefore a function of two factors: (1) the listening behavior of the educated population of the region, and (2) the ratio of the ratings of uneducated respondents to those of educated respondents in the entire data base. Uneducated respondents had a considerably lower rate of listening to Western radio broadcasts. In drawing listening estimates for the entire adult population the 24 cell demographic table and the 20-cell geographic table were then “Mostellerized” to derive listening estimates in each of the 24 cells.

Beyond “Mostellerization”

As more census data became available, there was reduced need for imputation and hence less reliance on “Mostellerization” and its assumptions to produce the estimated population tables. In parallel, the advent of more sample data made it possible to draw upon statistical adjustments for non-response in surveys to account for selection bias in those data (e.g., via inverse weighting methods). The standard assumptions underlying the adjustments, such as ‘missing at random’ or ‘ignorable selection’, were justified on substantive grounds for audience research. Log-linear techniques were applied to the adjusted data to obtain improved estimates of listening behavior. In this context, “Mostellerization” was an implicit part of the approach, through the use of the simulated/estimated population table to weight sample data. Ree Dawson played a key role in the new developments, which later included log-linear-based imputation, as a more stable alternative to simulation, for estimating geographic audiences.⁶

After we were able to conduct surveys inside the USSR in 1991-1992, Dawson did considerable analytical work applying Bayesian techniques (which would not have worked with the earlier, less extensive data) to study the value of combining data from internal surveys with visitor survey data in an attempt to bridge the biases in both approaches and form baselines for measuring listening trends.⁷ The early surveys conducted in the USSR and the Former Soviet Union (FSU) had been quite inconsistent in their findings and it took a couple of years for them to settle down and permit the charting of listening trends.

Other scholarly work of Prof. Ithiel de Sola Pool

As noted in the narrative portion of this book, Ithiel de Sola Pool was descended from a distinguished rabbinical family. His father, David de Sola Pool, was the rabbi of the leading Sephardic Synagogue in New York. His mother had been born in Palestine before emigrating to the US and was the daughter of a rabbi as well. Pool did all of his academic degrees at the University of Chicago which was

6 R. Eugene Parta and Ree Dawson, MIT. “Revised Geographic Estimates to Foreign Radio in the USSR for 1988 and 1989: Introduction of Log-Linear Imputation Techniques for Geographic Estimates,” AR 2-90, June 1990, HIA.

7 Ree Dawson, MIT. “Combining Soviet and Western Data on the Soviet Audience to Foreign Broadcasts,” June 17, 1991. REP

a leading American University in the 1930s in the development of the social sciences. During the war he went to Washington and was involved in the study of Nazi and communist propaganda. In the postwar period, after a stint at Stanford, he came to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he founded the Communications Research Program in the Center for International Studies and then led the effort to establish the Political Science Department. He was at MIT for more than 30 years and a leading figure in the Center for International Studies. Ithiel de Sola Pool died in 1984.

Pool was a leading authority on the social and political effects of communications. Among his numerous scholarly publications are *Trends in Content Analysis*, *American Business & Public Policy*, *The Social Impact of the Telephone*, *Technologies of Freedom* and *The Small World*. His book, *Technologies Without Boundaries*,⁸ was posthumously edited by Eli Noam of the Columbia University Business School. There are also two posthumous collections of Pool's work *Politics in Wired Nations*⁹ and *Humane Politics and Methods of Inquiry*¹⁰, edited by an MIT collaborator of Pool's, Dr. Lloyd Etheridge. The former contains an extensive bibliography of Pool's publications. The American Political Science Association (APSA) established an Ithiel de Sola Pool Prize that is awarded every three years and the Salzburg Global Seminar has established a prize lecture in the name of Ithiel de Sola Pool. Prof. de Sola Pool was a pioneer in wedding social science research to the newly developing technologies and SAAOR was truly fortunate in having his experience and wisdom guide it in its own pioneering work.

8 Ithiel de Sola Pool, *Technologies Without Boundaries: On Telecommunications in a Global Age*, ed. Eli Noam (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990). The Preface to the book contains a lengthy discussion of Pool and his work.

9 Lloyd S. Etheridge, ed., *Politics in Wired Nations: Selected writings of Ithiel de Sola Pool* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

10 Ithiel de Sola Pool and Lloyd S. Etheridge, eds., *Humane Politics and Methods of Inquiry* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000).

Some examples of SAAOR reporting and survey questions asked

Excerpts from Monthly Broadcast Area Listener Evidence Reports

The following are excerpts from the monthly broadcast area listener reports that were prepared for RFE/RL each month. Similar reports were prepared for VOA and BBC. The excerpts were preceded by a statistical summary of all interviews received during the month for both citizen traveler interviews and emigrant interviews. Similar monthly reports were also prepared for BBC and Voice of America. The page below shows a typical statistical summary followed by excerpts from interviews. The excerpts provided are meant to be typical and were not chosen for any specific content.

APPENDIX 4

SOVIET CITIZENS

INTERVIEWS RECEIVED

Total Respondents

592

Western Radio Listeners

280

Station Listeners

146

SOVIET EMIGRANTS

INTERVIEWS RECEIVED

Total Respondents

167

Western Radio Listeners

150

Station Listeners

48

FOREIGN STATIONS HEARD

India	1
BBC	100
DW	42
TWR	2
China	3
Canada	28
Finland	9
France	7
RFE	27
Iran	7
Israel	14
Italy	1
Japan	1
RL	146
Lux	5
Sweden	44
Vatican	0
VOA	171
Greece	7
Turkey	7
E.Europe	2

FOREIGN STATIONS HEARD

India	0
BBC	53
DW	25
TWR	1
China	6
Canada	11
Finland	15
France	17
RFE	11
Iran	7
Israel	79
Italy	0
Japan	2
RL	48
Lux	1
Sweden	28
Vatican	4
VOA	111
Greece	0
Turkey	6
E.Europe	1

COMMENTS FROM SOVIET CITIZEN RESPONDENTS:

REF: 17349
 SEX: male
 AGE: 30's
 JOB AREA: teaching
 NATIONALITY: ukrainian
 OBLAST: kherson
 REPUBLIC: ukraine
 EDUCATION: high
 CPSU: no
 LANGUAGE: rus ukr
 LISTENS RUS: once a week
 LISTENS NAT: several x weekly
 AUDIBILITY: fair
 OTHER STATIONS:
 Luxembg
 VOA

17349. RUS.UKR. "I don't listen to Soviet radio; no one does. Television in the USSR is uninteresting, and I don't know what else to do in the evenings in the middle of winter. RL has better audibility than VOA. It broadcasts a lot of programs about the camps, and about dissidents--subjects we know nothing about. RL also has good newscasts; they are precise and unencumbered with empty phrases and demagoguery. Unfortunately, it has few good music programs."

REF: 17389
 SEX: male
 AGE: 30's
 JOB AREA: technical
 NATIONALITY: ukrainian
 OBLAST: nikolayev
 REPUBLIC: ukraine
 EDUCATION: technical
 CPSU: no
 LANGUAGE: rus ukr
 LISTENS RUS: several x weekly
 LISTENS NAT: several x weekly
 AUDIBILITY: poor
 OTHER STATIONS:
 Canada
 DW
 VOA

17389. RUS.UKR. "RL is the most interesting of all the Western stations because the people who work there know the Soviet Union personally. They know what Soviet life is really like, and they know how to get through to the Soviet listener. RL makes you think. You might not agree with what it says, but you are forced to think. It is not true that only people who are hostile to the regime listen to RL. Party members listen too; at least those of them that realize that not everything in the USSR is perfect." Began listening to Western radio as a result of his trips abroad. "I noticed that the West was quite different from the way it is described in the Soviet press. Life in the West was nowhere near as bad as they said! Also Western radio has a lot of interesting material that can't be found in the Soviet press."

REF: 17392
 SEX: male
 AGE: 50's
 JOB AREA: trade
 NATIONALITY: ukrainian
 OBLAST: kiev
 REPUBLIC: ukraine
 EDUCATION: high
 CPSU: unasc
 LANGUAGE: rus ukr
 LISTENS RUS: several x weekly
 LISTENS NAT: several x weekly
 AUDIBILITY: fair
 OTHER STATIONS:
 BBC VOA
 Canada
 DW

17392. RUS.UKR. "I like RL more than the other stations, and if I could, I would listen only to RL, and only in Ukrainian. People who trust each other discuss RL broadcasts, and those who have heard a program the others have missed make a point of passing on the contents.... The reason people listen to Western radio is undoubtedly because they can't find what they want in our press. Our media tend to give general political conclusions on a certain event, instead of relating the facts about it. In the case of the Pershing missiles, for instance, the Soviet press talks vaguely about 'aggressive groups,' 'enemies of the people,' etc. and makes no attempt to explain what exactly is happening, and why it is happening right now. So instead of asking further questions, which can be dangerous, people simply tune in Western radio instead."

- 10 -

COMMENTS FROM SOVIET CITIZEN RESPONDENTS:

REF: 17600
 SEX: male
 AGE: 50's
 JOB AREA: cultural
 NATIONALITY: russian
 OBLAST: moscow
 REPUBLIC: rsfsr
 EDUCATION: high
 CPSU: yes
 LANGUAGE: rus
 LISTENS RUS: once a week
 LISTENS NAT: does not apply
 AUDIBILITY: poor
 OTHER STATIONS:
 BBC Sweden
 Canada VOA
 Other

17600. RUS. "RL's broadcasts are interesting and substantive. Its journalists are never boring and there are programs to suit virtually every taste. It is also the only station to talk in any great depth about the opposition in the USSR. But I wish the station would say more about our past, and our historical roots. The Soviet press accuses RL of paying too much attention to the negative sides of the USSR. Since there is so little that is good about the Soviet Union, I personally find this quite acceptable. However, there is a danger that by concentrating on small things, RL will lose sight of the main issue--the body on which the disease first spread, or, in other words, the Soviet system."

REF: 17725
 SEX: male
 AGE: 50's
 JOB AREA: technical
 NATIONALITY: russian
 OBLAST: brest
 REPUBLIC: belorussia
 EDUCATION: technical
 CPSU: no
 LANGUAGE: rus
 LISTENS RUS: several x weekly
 LISTENS NAT: does not apply
 AUDIBILITY: fair
 OTHER STATIONS:
 E Europe
 RFE
 VOA

17725. RUS. "Radio Liberty gives a picture of the Soviet Union that is invariably negative. Ours is not an easy life, and we want to hear something that will take our minds off daily reality, so the image of desolation put forward by RL is likely to frighten away some of the station's listeners. In any case, our people are not quite so bereft of resources as RL seems to think. There is no reason to pity us." Respondent listens to Western radio to hear how Westerners live and what they think of the Soviet Union. "This is my first trip to the West; without Western radio I would have had no idea at all what the West is like up till now. Listening to Western radio is not against the law, even if the West is supposed to be our 'enemy.' Why shouldn't I know what our 'enemies' are talking about. I am old enough to distinguish truth from falsehood."

REF: 17763
 SEX: male
 AGE: 60's
 JOB AREA: unemployed
 NATIONALITY: russian
 OBLAST: moscow
 REPUBLIC: rsfsr
 EDUCATION: high
 CPSU: no
 LANGUAGE: rus
 LISTENS RUS: several x weekly
 LISTENS NAT: does not apply
 AUDIBILITY: poor
 OTHER STATIONS:
 BBC
 DW
 VOA

17763. RUS. "I find RL very interesting, especially programs on ex-Soviet writers and human rights activists living in the West. RL reports on things that are of interest to Soviet people, and it covers the European and American press and cultural scene, particularly activities linked to the defense of political prisoners in the USSR. Everyone in Moscow is interested in this, and listens to the radio, even though nearly all the programs are heavily jammed." Respondent began listening to Western radio in 1974 when Solzhenitsyn was exiled to the West. He wanted to know more about Solzhenitsyn and listen to readings of his books. Now he also listens to follow world events and keep up to date on various international crises."

- 29 -

COMMENTS FROM SOVIET CITIZEN RESPONDENTS:

REF: 17570
 SEX: male
 AGE: 20's
 JOB AREA: technical
 NATIONALITY: lithuanian
 OBLAST: lithuania
 REPUBLIC: lithuania
 EDUCATION: technical
 CPSU: no
 LANGUAGE: rus lit
 LISTENS RUS: monThly
 LISTENS NAT: monthly
 AUDIBILITY: impossible
 OTHER STATIONS:
 BBC VOA
 Canada
 Luxembg

17570. RUS.LIT. "RL has terrible audibility, and it isn't really very interesting. VOA is better; it's more competent--and also more believable, because VOA comes out of Washington, and RL out of Munich." Respondent listens to Western radio to relax in the evening because he has nothing else to do. He likes to know what is going on in the world, because Soviet information is inadequate. "To know what is going on in Poland or Afghanistan, the only source of truth is Western radio."

REF: 17482
 SEX: male
 AGE: 40's
 JOB AREA: blue collar
 NATIONALITY: tajik
 OBLAST: tajik
 REPUBLIC: tajikistan
 EDUCATION: primary
 CPSU: no
 LANGUAGE: rus taj
 LISTENS RUS: monThly
 LISTENS NAT: several x weekly
 AUDIBILITY: good
 OTHER STATIONS:
 Peking
 VOA

17482. RUS.TAJ. "To get a clear and reliable picture of world events it is absolutely necessary to listen to Western stations. Radio Liberty is fully conversant with national problems in the Central Asian republics. It should give as much information as possible on the installation of nuclear missiles in Europe. Our propaganda apparatus puts all the blame for this on the Americans. What is the true situation?"

REF: 17303
 SEX: male
 AGE: 50's
 JOB AREA: technical
 NATIONALITY: tatar
 OBLAST: tatar
 REPUBLIC: rsfsr
 EDUCATION: high
 CPSU: yes
 LANGUAGE: tat
 LISTENS RUS: does not apply
 LISTENS NAT: several x weekly
 AUDIBILITY: fair
 OTHER STATIONS:
 VOA

17303. TAT. "Radio Liberty is our only window to the West, since the signals of the other Western stations are too faint to reach us. RL gives us all the information we cannot get from domestic media. The programs are interesting, although possibly too provocative at times. But the main attraction is the fact that RL broadcasts in Tatar. This brings the station very close to us."

Supplementary Opinion Questions

In addition to data gathered on media behavior, we began to field attitudinal questions as early as 1971 when the interviewing was systematized. The following is a list of topics that we asked about and indicates the range of attitudes that we attempted to gather data on. The list, of course, only identifies the general topic and not the question or questions that were actually put to the respondent. In the later 1980s we were interested in following evolving attitudes toward such topics as the Soviet involvement in the war in Afghanistan, perceptions of glasnost and perestroika, and growing tensions among the national minorities.

1. Attacks on Western broadcasts in the Soviet press (1971)
2. Television viewing (1971)
3. Apollo 16 moon landing (1971)
4. President Nixon's visit to Moscow (1971)
5. Most admired non-Soviet personalities
6. Freedom of speech
7. Ending of Radio Liberty broadcasts (hypothetical) (1972)
8. Egyptian request for withdrawal of Soviet military personnel (1972)
9. Palestinian commando action at Munich Olympic games (1972)
10. Country most like to visit (1972)
11. Soviet grain purchases abroad (1972)
12. What makes you feel good? Bad?
13. Jewish emigration (1973)
14. Brezhnev visits US to talk with Nixon (1973)
15. Increased economic cooperation with the West (1973)
16. Attitudes toward Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn (1973-74)
17. Most admired non-Soviet personalities (1973-74)
18. Cessation of jamming of BBC, Deutsche Welle, VOA (1973)
19. Awareness of and attitudes toward Samizdat
20. Favorite writer, composer/musician, newspaper/magazine, major political figures
21. Solzhenitsyn's exile
22. Main sources of information
23. Group of questions on freedom of speech
24. Nixon resignation (1974)
25. Responsibility for Mideast crisis

26. What do you like most/least about the country in which the interview is conducted? What do you like most/least about the USSR?
27. Jewish emigration: are they right to leave?
28. Social stratification: a) improvement of material situation; b) existence of privileged groups.
29. Do you know anybody who is religious?
30. Are you in favor of strikes in the Soviet Union?
31. Likelihood of removal of Soviet officials for illegal activity/existence of groups who do not get fair legal treatment.
32. Sakharov's Nobel Prize
33. Education for professional career; preservation of ethnic heritage
34. Language spoken at home and at work/school
35. Right of Soviet citizens to emigrate
36. Helsinki agreement
37. Evaluation of Soviet media
38. Television viewing habits
39. Grain purchases abroad
40. Economic situation in USSR
41. Russification of national minorities
42. Fear of nuclear war
43. Attitudes toward Andropov as new General Secretary of CPSU
44. The Korean Airliner incident
45. Attitudes toward the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan
46. *Vremya* TV news magazine
47. Attitudes toward war in Afghanistan
48. Attitudes toward China
49. Attitudes toward developments in Eastern Europe
50. Attitudes on East/West relations
51. International terrorism
52. Evolving attitudes on war in Afghanistan
53. Attitudes/understanding of Glasnost
54. Evolving attitudes on war in Afghanistan
55. Perceptions of Gorbachev
56. Perceptions of Perestroika
57. National minority issues
58. Evolving attitudes on war in Afghanistan
59. Evolving perceptions of Gorbachev

60. Evolving perceptions of Perestroika
61. Changes in Soviet mass media
62. Evolving perceptions of Perestroika
63. Follow-up on national minority issues
64. Evolving attitudes on war in Afghanistan
65. Awareness of and attitudes toward informal groups in Soviet society
66. Awareness of changes in audibility of Radio Liberty (1988)
67. Introduction of Agorametrie conflict themes (see below)
68. Central Asian Issues

Conflict Themes for First Agorametrie Study: April 1989

The following is a list of “conflict themes” for the first study with Agorametrie. Respondents were given the following response categories: Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree. No response was also coded.

1. Terrorism in any form is never justified.
2. Rock music is harmful to our young people.
3. Travel abroad should be unrestricted.
4. Differences in individual incomes should be minimized.
5. Stalin was a great leader, despite his faults.
6. Some censorship is always necessary.
7. Glasnost has not gone far enough.
8. We have a duty to support third world countries.
9. Ultimately, Lenin was to blame for our problems.
10. The West poses a threat to the Soviet Union.
11. There should be more than one candidate in all elections.
12. The West has too much influence on us.
13. Informal groups are harmful to our society.
14. My standard of living will be higher in five years.
15. Marxism is dead.
16. One doesn't learn anything in school anymore.
17. It is every young man's duty to serve in the military.
18. The danger of drug addition to our society is exaggerated.
19. More freedom for private initiative!

20. The problem of bureaucracy is exaggerated.
21. The family is the basic unit of society.
22. Pollution is extremely troubling.
23. The Soviet army is one of the best in the world.
24. It's necessary to return to communist morality!
25. Nuclear energy should be developed further.
26. Any citizen should be free to emigrate.
27. One can have confidence in Soviet justice.
28. Foreign trade is the key to improving the economy.
29. Shorten the time of compulsory military service.
30. Price increases are inevitable.
31. The USSR needs a multi-party political structure.
32. No Republic should be permitted to leave the USSR.
33. Return to Russian pre-revolutionary values!
34. Women are still oppressed.
35. The USSR was right to fight in Afghanistan.
36. We spend too much on the military.
37. Political activity is a waste of time.
38. Strikes threaten perestroika.
39. Those who make profits from cooperatives are dishonest.
40. Gorbachev is going too fast.
41. We can count on our East European allies.
42. Trade unions should be independent.
43. God exists.
44. Perestroika will succeed!
45. The European peoples of the USSR should have a higher birthrate.
46. Television takes us for idiots!
47. The "Jewish-Masonic Plot" is a myth!
48. Abolish the death penalty.
49. In time, technical progress will solve all our problems.
50. Some unemployment is inevitable in modern society.

This first list of conflict themes was later adapted as the situation in the USSR evolved.

The last study incorporating Agorametrie “conflict themes” with Soviet citizen travelers was in the field in the spring of 1991. It reflects the changed environment. “Disagree” combines both “strongly” and “tend to” while agree also combines both “strongly” and “tend to.” “Neither” is not included below so the totals don’t add to 100.

1. Rock music is harmful to our young people. *Disagree – 58%, Agree – 22%*
2. Environmental pollution troubles me greatly. *Disagree – 5%, Agree – 85%*
3. Our East European allies should choose their own path.
Disagree – 16%, Agree – 61%
4. Women are still oppressed. *Disagree – 42%, Agree – 34%*
5. The right to strike is being abused. *Disagree – 44%, Agree – 28%*
6. Our children are growing up healthy. *Disagree – 56%, Agree – 22%*
7. Abolish the death penalty. *Disagree – 38%, Agree – 40%*
8. Alcoholism is a major threat to our country. *Disagree – 13%, Agree – 73%*
9. My life is full of new possibilities. *Disagree – 39%, Agree – 30%*
10. We should support the spread of cooperatives. *Disagree – 12%, Agree – 69%*
11. Soviet justice is fair. *Disagree – 59%, Agree – 19%*
12. Western culture has a negative influence on us. *Disagree – 60%, Agree – 13%*
13. Our children don’t learn anything in school anymore.
Disagree – 55%, Agree – 19%
14. Technological disasters like Chernobyl are unlikely to recur.
Disagree – 48%, Agree – 13%
15. Reform that doesn’t bring more consumer goods is meaningless.
Disagree – 16%, Agree – 67%
16. There is nothing wrong with stealing from the workplace.
Disagree – 60%, Agree – 18%
17. The USSR was right to fight in Afghanistan. *Disagree – 81%, Agree – 8%*
18. This past year was more difficult than the year before.
Disagree – 16%, Agree – 54%
19. It is the duty of the USSR to provide aid to the Third World.
Disagree – 58%, Agree – 15%
20. We must continue disarmament in Europe irrespective of NATO.
Disagree – 33%, Agree – 46%

21. God exists. *Disagree – 15%, Agree – 57%*
22. Charity is one of the main traits of our society. *Disagree – 46%, Agree – 23%*
23. Environmental groups should be supported. *Disagree – 17%, Agree – 86%*
24. Gorbachev is going too fast with reforms. *Disagree – 61%, Agree – 16%*
25. Trade unions should be independent. *Disagree – 5%, Agree – 75%*
26. Accidents in the workplace are rare. *Disagree – 62%, Agree – 14%*
27. It's time to reduce military spending. *Disagree – 4%, Agree – 85%*
28. Stalin was a great leader, despite his faults. *Disagree – 66%, Agree – 12%*
29. Our media have become too critical of our shortcomings.
Disagree – 53%, Agree – 22%
30. Ideological education is a waste of time. *Disagree – 18%, Agree – 63%*
31. We need a firm policy to halt price increases. *Disagree – 9%, Agree – 59%*
32. Marxism is bankrupt. *Disagree – 16%, Agree – 56%*
33. We should build more nuclear power plants. *Disagree – 43%, Agree – 23%*
34. It's not shameful to try to work as little as possible.
Disagree – 57%, Agree – 16%
35. It's every young man's duty to serve in the military. *Disagree – 28%, Agree – 53%*
36. The problem of bureaucracy is exaggerated by the reformers.
Disagree – 54%, Agree – 20%
37. The level of violence in our society is increasing. *Disagree – 8%, Agree – 80%*
38. The rise in ethnic self-awareness is a good thing.
Disagree – 17%, Agree – 61%
39. It is necessary to ban certain books. *Disagree – 42%, Agree – 29%*
40. Job security should not be sacrificed to reform. *Disagree – 18%, Agree – 57%*
41. The level of violence in our society is increasing. *Data is missing*
42. AIDS represents a real threat to Soviet society. *Disagree – 13%, Agree – 64%*
43. I don't feel secure anymore. *Disagree – 18%, Agree – 66%*
44. Marriage is dead. *Disagree – 53%, Agree – 16%*
45. Differences in individual incomes should be minimized.
Disagree – 56%, Agree – 23%
46. Our children should be taught more respect for authority.
Disagree – 23%, Agree – 50%
47. Lenin is at the root of our problems. *Disagree – 26%, Agree – 39%*
48. Homosexuals should be treated just like other people.
Disagree – 32%, Agree – 29%
49. It's OK for some people to get rich. *Disagree – 19%, Agree – 51%*
50. I have little influence over the things that happen to me. *Data is missing*

Profiles of the SAAOR Team

Over the years, the SAAOR team included some remarkable people and it is to their credit that we accomplished as much as we did. This appendix provides short profiles of SAAOR staff members who worked in Paris until 1991, plus some of the MOR team who joined us in Munich, and also outlines their subsequent careers, which have in many cases been extremely successful. I have also listed some of the many interns who spent time in our Paris office. My apologies to anyone I have inadvertently omitted, or whose later activities I was unable to ascertain.

SAAOR in Paris: 1970–1991

THE DIRECTORS

Max RALIS: 1956–1981. Director of RL Audience Research (ARD). Born in Russia in 1916, grew up in Berlin's Russian emigré community. Involved in anti-Fascist activities in Paris in 1930s, wounded in French army at beginning of WWII, escaped to US via Portugal. Doctorate from University of Cologne. Worked on Harvard Soviet Union Project among Soviet emigrants in Germany after the war, later carried out field studies for Cornell University in India. Joined RL in 1956. Created Audience Research from the ground up using listener mail, traveler interviews, programming reviews, and later emigrant interviews. Retired in 1981.

Gene (Russell Eugene) PARTA: 1970–1991. Director of RL Audience Research (SAAOR), 1981–1991. Born in Minnesota, educated at St. Olaf College and Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International

Studies. Joined RL in 1965 in New York, moved to Munich in 1966, and joined Audience Research in 1969. Initiated systematized traveler interviewing in Finland (1970), achieved first audience estimates with MIT specialists using computer simulation methodology (1973), explored new ways of charting Soviet public opinion (1980s), inaugurated polling inside the USSR (1990). **1991–1994**, Director of Media and Opinion Research (MOR), successor organization to SAAOR in Munich (part of the of the RFE/RL Research Institute). **1995–2006**, Director of RFE/RL Audience Research, based in Prague. **2003–2004**, Osher Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University. **2007**, Research Associate at George Washington University. **2017–2018**, Visiting Scholar at the Hoover Institution. Currently living in Washington, D.C.

THE STAFF

Charlie ALLEN: 1980–1989. Field Operations Manager, and from 1988 Deputy Director of SAAOR. Responsible for expanding field work into new areas and coordinating data collection. Grew up in Missouri. Educated at Dartmouth, Harvard, and the Sorbonne. After leaving SAAOR, he took an MBA at the INSEAD business school in France and then worked for Bunge Limited in US and Switzerland, where he often had dealings with the former Soviet Union. Currently living in St. Louis, teaching at the St. Louis campus of the University of Missouri and translating Russian literature.

Richard BROOKS: 1987–1990. Systems Analyst. Oversaw computer operations, innovations in data processing, and data analysis. Born in Texas, educated at Johns Hopkins, doctorate from Louisiana State University. Previously worked for NASA Goddard Spaceflight Center and RFE/RL Computer Center. On leaving SAAOR, consultant for French Stock Exchange and World Bank. Now Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Clemson University.

Amy CORNING: 1988–1991. Research Analyst, specializing in survey research data and field operations. Took over computer operations after Richard Brooks left SAAOR. Grew up in US and Moscow, educated at Radcliffe and Harvard, doctorate from University of Michigan. **1991–1994**, transferred to MOR in Munich. Left Radios in 1994 to return to academia. Currently an assistant professor at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Constantin GALSKOY: 1987–1990. Research Analyst. Responsible for collating and translating background material drawn from SAAOR's emigrant

questionnaires. Born in Morocco to Russian emigré family, doctorate from Stanford. Previously director of RL Russian service. After leaving SAAOR, worked for *Reader's Digest* Russian-language version and taught at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut. Sadly, Constantin passed away in 2020.

Susan GIGLI: 1991. Focus Group Coordinator. Joined SAAOR in Paris, before moving to Munich with MOR. Born in New York, educated at George Washington University and Columbia University. Before joining SAAOR, worked for HIAS in Rome. **1991–1994,** responsible for focus groups and in-depth interviews with MOR of the RFE/RL Research Institute. **1994–2014,** transferred to InterMedia in Washington. Has since worked for Broad Branch Associates (a boutique global health consultancy), and is currently Global Director, International Development with Kantar Public.

Michael HANEY: 1989–1991. Field Operations Manager. Responsible for overseeing field operations in conjunction with Gene Parta and Slavko Martyniuk. Educated at Vassar, spent time in USSR on traveling exhibit for USIA, worked for Stanford University Library Russian Collection. **1991–1994,** Research Manager at MOR in Munich. After leaving the Radios took an MA in International Relations at the School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University and then joined the World Bank. Now living in Washington, D.C.

Nicole KOSTOMAROFF: 1970–1991. Office Manager. Responsible for logging, distribution, and translation of questionnaires received from the field, plus general office administration. Born in France of Russian-Polish parents. Worked for United Artists and CBS before joining Max Ralis at ARD. Left SAAOR when office relocated to Munich. Sadly, Nicole passed away in 2014.

Patricia LEROY: 1974–1991. Manuscript Editor. Born in Liverpool, educated at University of Sussex, resident in Paris since 1969. Responsible for coordinating, rewriting, and verifying all SAAOR's reports. Left SAAOR when office relocated to Munich. Author of nine published novels on themes including Nazi art thefts, poets in Stalin's Russia, mafia in Central Asia, and Stasi files (www.patricialeroy.com).

Fiona MACLACHLAN: 1988–1990. Translator from Russian and French, responsible for listener feedback on RL, BBC, and VOA. Born in Scotland, educated at University of St. Andrews.

Jaroslav MARTYNIUK: 1985–1991. Field Operations Manager. Responsible for overseeing field operations in tandem with Gene Parta and Charlie

Allen. Born in Ukraine, immigrated to Chicago in 1949. Business degree from University of Illinois, previously worked for Amoco Oil and OECD in Paris. **1991–2011**, Research Manager at MOR in Munich, and then Inter-Media in Washington, D.C. Author of memoir *Monte Rosa*. Now living in Washington, D.C.

Kathleen Neveski MIHALISKO: 1981–1987. Research Analyst, specializing in research into non-Russian nationalities. Born in Connecticut, educated at Yale and Harvard. **1987–1992**, worked for RL Research in Munich. **1992–1994**, returned to MOR, and helped develop survey capabilities in Ukraine and Belorussia. Left RFE/RL to pursue career in information technology. Currently working at European-based consulting firm.

Albert MOTIVANS: 1990–1991. Research Analyst, focusing on Baltic-area projects and statistical work. **1991–1994**, transferred to MOR in Munich. Born in US of Latvian parents, educated at University of Wisconsin. Previously employed at US Census Bureau. On leaving Radios, he joined UNICEF in Montreal as a statistician. Currently Head of Data and Research at Equal Measures 2030, which is a partnership of various actors around data and social change. Lives in Bethesda, Md.

Ségolène Gauthier MYKOLENKO: 1987–1991. Data Evaluator. Responsible for data processing with optical mark reader, control work in the field, translation. **1991–1994**, transferred to MOR in Munich. Born in Nancy, degree from INALCO. After leaving RFE/RL, worked for French international company Lafarge. Currently Chief of Staff to Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Bishop of St. Volodymyr the Great in Paris.

Dawn PLUMB NOWACKI: 1981–1984. Research Analyst. Principal analyst for studies of food availability. Grew up in Tacoma, WA, educated at University of Washington, doctorate from Emory University, Atlanta. Since 1994, professor at Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon.

Charlotte PULLEN: 1987–1989. Translator/editor. Worked on listener feedback for RL, BBC, VOA. Born in London, B.A. from University of St. Andrews, Masters from Catholic University of America. Moved to US after leaving SAAOR, worked at Aspen Institute and US Senate. Currently librarian at National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C.

Mark RHODES: 1980–1985. Research Analyst, principally responsible for analyzing listener data. Born in Michigan, doctorate from Michigan State University. **1985–1991**, based in Washington, working for RFE/RL and USIA. **1992–1994**, analyst and research coordinator with MOR in Munich.

1995–2012, director of InterMedia, MOR's successor organization in Washington D.C. Now retired and living in Maryland.

Susan ROEHM: 1984–1991. Focus Group Coordinator. Pioneered focus groups on radio programming in late 1980s. Born in Connecticut, educated at Barnard College and Columbia University. Previously account executive at Smith/Greenland Advertising (NYC). **1991–1993**, transferred with MOR to Munich. **1993–1994**, Executive Assistant to RFE/RL President Gene Pell. Now living in Virginia.

Roselyn ROMBERG: 1984–1987. Systems Analyst. Created SAAOR's first intra-office network. Educated at Wesleyan College and Emerson College, experience at MIT and in Silicon Valley. Now living and working in Massachusetts.

Elaine WARD: 1989–1990. Translator/editor. Worked on listener feedback for RL, VOA, BBC. Educated at University of St. Andrews.

Sallie WISE: 1984–1989. Research Analyst. Principal analyst for opinion research on Afghanistan and glasnost. Born in Ohio, educated at Yale and Harvard. Before joining SAAOR, spent three years at RL Research, rejoined department as Washington liaison in 1989, then returned to Munich to edit Daily Report on USSR. Later President of FAWCO, the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas. Now living in Paris.

INTERNS AND SHORT-TERM HIRES

Dan ABELE: Data entry. Subsequently worked for the Canadian embassy in Washington, DC. Now is Senior Business Manager at Global Research Innovations, LLC.

Scott BILLY: Data entry.

Ariel COHEN: Translator. Now Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington, DC, and Chairman of International Market Analysis.

Tanya GESSE: Translation. Now an international interpreter.

John FREEDMAN: Translation/data entry. Theater critic of *Moscow News* from 1992 to 2015, author of several books on Russian theater.

Mike FRIEDMAN: Data entry.

Brigitte HEISLER: Data entry. Now deceased (2003).

Steadman HINCKLEY: Translation/data entry. Career working for the US government.

Andrew KUCHINS: Translator/researcher. Later Director of Carnegie Moscow Center, Director of CSIS Russia/Eurasia Program, and Senior Fellow at

Georgetown University. Was President of the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Now living in the Washington, DC, area.

Esther LENEMAN: Coding/translation. Long-time reporter at French radio station Europe 1.

Laure MANDEVILLE: Translation. Now a senior reporter at *Le Figaro* in Paris.

Rima PUNISKA: Data entry.

Peter SHINKLE: Translation. Later career as news reporter in St. Louis and author.

Allison STANGER: Translator/researcher. Has been on the faculty for many years at Middlebury College and was chairman of the Political Science Department. She is the author of several books on international relations.

Charles WILLIAMS: Data entry.

Media and Opinion Research (MOR) of the RFE/RL Research Institute in Munich

(1991–1994 DOES NOT INCLUDE THOSE WHO CAME FROM PARIS)

Peter Herrmann: Hired from BBC Audience Research in 1987 to become Director of East European Audience and Opinion Research (EEAOR). After merger with SAAOR in the RFE/RL Research Institute became Deputy Director of MOR. After closure of the Institute went with InterMedia in Washington, DC. After retirement from InterMedia moved to Australia where he bought a vineyard. Now living in the UK.

Patricia Moy. Analyst. After leaving MOR did a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. Now a tenured Professor of Communication at the University of Washington. She is the editor of the *Public Opinion Quarterly*, and past president of the World Association for Public Opinion Research, the International Communication Association, and President-elect of the American Association for Public Opinion Research.

Michael Deis. Analyst. CEO of Primer, a survey research organization based in Las Vegas, NV.

Sarah Oates: Analyst. Professor and Senior Scholar at University of Maryland.

Other MOR colleagues for whom I have no further professional information:

David Taylor, Former Deputy Director;

Jill Chin, Analyst;

Cornelia Petratu, Analyst;

Catherine Banush, Analyst;

Darya Bobek, Analyst;

Sylvia Grossmann-Sadgrove, Administrative Assistant;

Marlies Schulte-Ebert, Administrative Assistant;

Mary Cline, Analyst;

Mark Spina, Analyst.

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Index

- Agorametric, 239, 240, 253, 275–77, 305, 363, 394, 396
- Aigner, Helmut, 138, 152, 182, 197, 208, 269, 369
- Alberti, Irina Ilovaiskaya, 37, 60, 369
- Allen, Charlie, 96, 98, 101, 102, 110, 134, 146, 148, 150, 182, 215, 237, 241, 271, 283, 291, 364, 369, 372, 373
- American Joint Distribution Committee (JOINT), 206
- Andropov Diaries*, 108
- Andropov, Yuri, 107, 122
- Anin, David, 33, 58, 102
- anti-communist reports, 123
- anti-Semitic commentaries, 123
- Asanchayev, Janet, 82
- audibility and jamming, 108, 113, 166, 167, 235, 108, 113, 166, 167, 235, 394
- audience estimates, 5, 78, 79, 83, 88, 98, 113, 166, 216, 300, 306, 377, 382, 400
- audience expansion, 143, 233, 344
- Audience Research Division (ARD), 2, 4, 20, 31, 34, 35, 37–39, 42–45, 52, 55, 57, 60, 66, 71, 77, 81, 84–92, 284, 300, 399
- audience research units, 87, 162, 307, 322
- Background Reports (BGRs), 60
- Bailey, George, 120, 123, 125
- Balcar, Joan, 46, 47, 57
- BBC, 3, 13, 28, 36, 39, 46, 47, 58, 60, 62, 68, 70, 83, 100, 101, 107, 110, 111, 120, 126, 127, 143, 145, 146, 149, 156, 167, 187, 191, 192, 195, 199, 204, 209, 215, 217, 219, 221, 223, 224, 229, 231, 232, 235, 245, 247, 249, 251, 256, 261, 263, 273, 276, 293, 296, 297, 314, 317, 334, 335, 342, 347, 350, 352, 365, 387, 392, 401–4
- Belson, William, 151, 197
- Bet, Shin, 187, 368
- Board for International Broadcasting (BIB), 5, 19, 76, 77, 81, 83, 85, 86, 88–90, 92, 118–20, 126, 138, 145, 157, 174, 175, 207, 218, 230, 231, 274, 294, 295, 297, 320, 325, 331, 352, 362
- “Board of Trustees,” 20, 21, 39, 74
- Broadcast Area Listener Evidence (BALE), 131, 167
- Brooks, Richard, 179, 193, 216, 217, 277, 283, 400
- Buchan, Alex, 84, 91
- Buckley, James L., 119, 122, 362
- Burger, Inna, 58
- Bush, Keith, 96, 103
- Cancan in the English Garden*, 41
- Central European Market Research (CEM), 289
- Citizen data, 107, 113
- Cline, Mary, 299, 405
- Cody, Morrill, 55, 56, 360, 361
- COFREMCA, 86
- Cohen, Ariel, 105, 130, 134, 403
- Cold War, 1, 2, 6, 9, 13, 16, 124, 234, 295, 303, 316, 319, 325, 327, 328, 330, 331, 335, 337, 338, 341, 345
- Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, 2, 231, 358
- Conference on International Broadcasting Audience Research (CIBAR), 251, 307, 322

- Corning, Amy, 217, 250, 254, 262, 277, 283, 287, 316
Communication Research, 118, 378
 Communist Communications Project (Com-Com), 69, 377
 Consistent System, 81, 180, 216,
 Core Audience, 198, 199, 278, 343, 382
 Critchlow, James, 31, 34, 46, 88, 89, 91, 126, 359
 Cross-Cultural Research (CCR), 46, 47, 57
Current Time, 335
- Dawson, Ree, 198, 216, 278, 353, 377, 383, 384
 de Sola Pool, Ithiel, 22, 69, 70, 78, 88, 118, 356, 377, 384, 385
 Deutsche Welle, 3, 13, 46, 58, 68, 100, 107, 126, 127, 167, 187, 191, 199, 219, 221, 224, 231, 233, 249, 251, 252, 314, 317, 342, 347, 350, 372, 374, 392
 “Developing a Methodology for Projecting the Audience to Foreign Broadcasts in the Soviet Union,” 199
 Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), 135, 136, 150, 179
 Domestic Research Bureau-Lever Brothers (DRB), 219, 220
 Durkee, William, 77
- East European Audience and Opinion Research (EEAOR), 92, 104, 112, 126, 137, 151, 161, 182, 215, 216, 241, 242, 279, 282–84, 297, 404
 Eisenhower Commission, 74, 75, 88
 El Foodo, 117
 emigrant data, 107, 113, 166, 272, 350
 ESOMAR (European Society of Marketing and Opinion Research), 134, 147–49, 160–62, 165, 244, 245, 266, 301
 espionage, 66, 85, 104, 171, 178, 334, 373
 European Broadcasting Union (EBU), 251
- Ferguson, Glenn, 92, 100, 107, 119
Financial Times, 205, 293
 focus groups, 5, 193, 205, 210, 217, 232, 234, 247, 248, 253, 258, 260, 261, 272, 275, 286, 288, 289, 296, 305, 306, 309, 322, 330, 365, 401
 Forbes, Malcom S., 174, 294, 295, 320
 Freedman, John, 181, 182, 403
- Galskoy, Constantin, 172, 195, 248, 283, 400
 Gaumert, Alexandra, 60
- Geleklidis, Christopher, 37, 66, 110, 225, 226, 241, 270, 271, 371
 Gendler, Yuri, 61
 Gesellschaft fur Marktforschung (GfM), 136, 137, 202, 271
 Gigli, Susan, 283, 288, 299, 306, 322
 Gildner, Jay, 90, 132, 164, 172, 174, 190
 Ginsburg, Alek, 214
 “giveaways,” 34, 35
 Gladilin, Anatoly, 57
 Grayevsky, Victor, 115, 187, 273, 274, 275, 303, 367
 Gudridge, Ernie, 84, 85, 87–91, 127
- Field Service, 86, 87, 136, 163, 185, 242
 Finnish Better Business Bureau, 85
- Hart, Henry, 89, 137, 138, 161, 215
 Haney, Michael, 237, 242, 258, 270, 283, 287, 291, 296, 307, 322
 Harvard Interview Project, 133
 Harvard University Refugee Interview Project, 32
 Hankins, Irwin, 163, 165, 189, 203, 227, 270
 Hinckley, Steedman, 151
 Honeywell Bull, 82
 Hoover Institution Archives, 3, 7, 34, 39, 44, 358, 367
- IBM, 67, 70, 71, 78, 80, 81
 IMA, 186, 187, 188, 200, 202, 241, 242, 272, 275, 288
 independent media, blocking of, 7, 338
 “information war,” 7, 333
 Ingleright, Greg, 135, 136
 INSEARCH Inc., 191
 Institute for the Study of the USSR, 29, 125
 international broadcasting, 9, 14, 75, 76, 81, 84, 89, 107, 117, 123, 126, 147, 156, 167, 214, 218, 251, 322, 328, 331, 358, 359, 360, 364, 367
International Herald Tribune, 167, 172, 302
 International Media Analysis (AMA), 186, 187, 188, 200, 202, 241, 275, 288
 International Research Institute on Social Change (RISC), 6, 281, 286, 300–2, 305, 307, 314–17, 321, 322, 330, 363
 interviewing
 of emigrants, 59, 105, 113, 114, 117, 225, 272, 279
 in Bulgaria, 290
 in Denmark, 104

- in Finland, 86, 400
- in Japan, 139
- in Rome, 60, 105
- in Sweden, 104
- in the Nordic area, 46
- in the USSR, 254, 271, 272
- methods, 111, 155, 262
- Soviet travelers, 22, 36, 39, 52, 67, 124, 147, 208, 269, 370
- In the Country and the World*, 205, 206, 211, 293
- INTORA, 85, 137, 138, 152, 241, 269
- Iron Curtain, 13, 124, 300
- Isotov, Dima, 47
- Izvestiya*, 40, 66
- Jamming and Audibility Reports (JARs), 167, 264
- Johnson, A. Ross, 2, 279, 284, 298, 357, 361
- KEME, 241, 270, 271
- Kiuru, Kari, 51, 89, 137, 242, 269, 311
- Klensin, John, 79, 117, 118, 127, 135, 136, 180, 196, 216, 301
- Knutson, Ruth, 57, 77, 90
- Komsomolskaya pravda*, 40
- Kostomarov, Nicole, 56, 102, 103, 135, 193, 322
- KPR-Marketing, 89, 137, 182, 242, 269
- Krasnaya zvezda*, 40
- Krokodil*, 40, 41
- Kuchins, Andrew, 134, 404
- Leroy, Michele, 136, 163, 184, 185
- Leroy, Patricia, 77, 102, 126, 132, 135, 151, 167, 182, 209, 282, 322, 401
- Liberty Live*, 306
- Lindblad, Goran, 51, 52, 63–65
- listener mail, 31, 34–36, 39, 399
- Listener Panel Reviews, 57, 158, 175, 205
- listening patterns, 113, 183, 342
- listening trends, 52, 70, 198, 343, 382, 384
- Literaturnaya gazeta*, 40, 173
- MacLachlan, Fiona, 217, 401
- Malesky-Malevich, 38
- Mandeville, Laure, 198, 404
- Market Research and Advisory Services (MRAS), 190, 203, 228, 270
- Marsh, William W., 173, 363
- Martyniuk, Jaroslav, 150, 401
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), 4, 22, 69, 78, 385
- Media and Opinion Research (MOR), 6, 279, 281–289, 292, 293, 296–302, 304, 308, 314–316, 322, 330, 352, 357, 399–404
- Megreblan, Sonia, 57
- Melen, Ola, 47
- Memento Publication and Information Services (MPIS), 132
- Merlero, Anne-Daniele, 38, 56, 89, 245
- Method of Comparative and Continuing Sampling, 112
- Michener, James, 119, 157
- Mickelson, Sig, 77, 80, 92
- Mihalisko, Kathleen, 127, 130, 160, 191, 349
- Mikoh Research, 139
- Mirsky, Semyon, 57
- Mostellerization, 79, 82, 88, 118, 378, 379, 380, 383, 384
- Motivans, Albert, 277, 283, 288, 301
- Moy, Patricia, 299, 404
- Myhul, Ivan, 189, 190, 201, 203, 228
- Mykolenko, Segolene, 194, 195, 265, 284, 287
- NATO, 48, 121, 144, 333, 335, 373
- Nedelya*, 66
- Neimanis, Orest, 31, 33, 45, 102
- Nekrasov, Viktor Platonovich, 72, 172, 173, 364, 365, 366
- Neveski, Kathleen, 102, 402
- New York Times*, 104, 214, 338, 351
- NHK, 141
- Nicotera, Elena, 60, 61, 206, 207, 225
- “Notes on Radio Liberty” in *Kontinent*, 154
- Office of Net Assessment (ONA), 117
- Open Media Research Institute (OMRI), 321, 322
- open questionnaire, 148, 152, 182, 241, 243
- Open Technology Fund (OTF), 329
- Opinion and Media Research Institute (OMRI), 104, 145
- Optimal Mark Reading (OMR), 196, 197
- Pages, Christian, 101, 103
- Panayi, Joy Butler, 58
- Panich, Igor, 207
- Peacock, Ben, 18, 19, 20, 21
- Pell Amendment, 119
- Pell, Eugene, 170, 363
- Perry, George, 33, 36, 58, 91–93, 102, 284
- Petrouskiene, Lydia, 57, 172
- Pikkarainen, Oras, 52

- Pitts, Florence, 92, 93, 191
 Plumb, Dawn, 102, 144, 162
 Polish Press Agency (PAP), 115, 367
 Poltinikova, Eleonora, 62, 105, 114, 116
 Pomar, Mark, 123
 Public Opinion Research of Israel, 62
 Pullen, Charlotte, 195, 201, 217, 237, 283, 402
- Quality Control Reports (QCRs), 42, 58
 Quinn, Thomas, 85
- Radio Canada International, 58, 164, 167, 229
 Radio Free Afghanistan (RFA), 218–21, 224
 Radio Free Europe (RFE), 4, 13, 14, 41, 73, 74, 77, 218, 256, 279, 320, 325, 359, 361
 Radio Liberation, 19, 40
 Radio Liberty,
 attacks on, 3, 21, 31, 32, 34, 39, 40–42, 66, 73, 179, 263, 303
 broadcasts, 2, 43, 392
 estimate of audience size, 67
 foundation of, 19
 listening trends, 52, 71, 198, 343, 382, 384
 research methods, 3, 304
 Radio Liberty Committee, 17, 19, 21, 24, 30, 56
 Radio Liberty's religious programming, 247
 Radio Liberty's Russian Service, 31, 57, 61, 68, 113, 123, 141, 146, 154–56, 158–60, 169, 172, 177, 178, 195, 206, 209, 213, 218, 232, 235, 257, 266, 292, 306, 308, 352, 401
 radio listening behavior, 105, 107, 203, 330, 383, 384
 Radio Marti, 208
 Radio Moscow, 13, 232, 251, 304, 307, 323
 "Radio Operators and Equipment in the USSR," 166
 Radio Prague, 13
 Radio Sweden, 13
 Ralis, Max, 31–33, 36, 37, 43–45, 52, 55, 56, 58, 62, 66, 69, 80, 89, 91, 101, 161, 284, 355, 362, 365, 369, 401
 report on Soviet citizens' reactions to the war, 153
 Research Institute on Social Change (RISC), 6, 281, 286, 300, 301, 302, 305, 307, 314–17, 321, 322, 330, 363
 Research Machine, 238, 277, 284, 299
 RFE/RL management, 88, 126, 145, 162, 255
 RFE/RL merger, 77
 RFE/RL office
 in London, 58, 90–92
 in Munich, 52, 57, 58
 in Paris, 77, 82, 92, 101, 103, 105, 129, 167, 261, 283, 399
 in Washington, 98, 168, 170
 RFE/RL Research Institute, 2, 6, 279, 282, 284, 292, 299, 301, 308, 310, 314, 319, 329, 330, 357, 363, 400, 401, 404
 Rhodes, Mark, 96, 102, 113, 117, 121, 133, 147, 167, 176, 209, 211, 235, 255, 297, 298, 314, 322
 right to strike, 106, 396
 RL programming, 5, 22, 34, 83, 108, 24, 127, 213, 245, 269, 288
 Roberts, Walter, 81, 85, 126
 Roehm, Susan, 134, 158, 260, 283, 287, 288, 306, 319, 403
 Romberg, Roselyn, 135, 150, 179, 403
 Ross, Stu, 85
 Russian invasion of Ukraine, 1, 7
 Ryser, Witold, 57
- Sadgrove-Grossman, Sylvia, 58
 Salkazanova, Fatima, 57, 172
 Sargeant, Howland, 3, 16, 20, 32, 39, 43, 55, 56, 58, 77, 356
 Satter, David, 206, 211–13
 Sauerberg, Steen, 104, 105, 146, 372
 Scott, Ken, 23, 28–30, 75
 Shakespeare, Frank, 118, 119, 174, 362
 Shinkle, Peter, 131, 132, 167, 404
 Shtern, Yuri, 225
 simulation process, 4, 7, 69, 70, 78–80, 127, 169, 176, 199, 377, 378, 382, 384, 400
 Sinyavsky, Andrei, 22, 61, 72, 172, 366
 SOFEMA, 86
 Sokolov, Andrei, 307
Sovetskaya Rossiya, 40
 Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research department (SAAOR)
 data on food supply, 117
 relations with other Western broadcasters to the USSR, 166
 research process of, 3, 4, 122
 Soviet Census, 79
 Soviet Interview Project (SIP), 133, 156
 Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), 79
 Sternberg, Hilary, 58, 90
 structured interviewing methods, 76, 84
 survey research, 2, 5, 45, 68, 86, 109, 129, 136, 149, 151, 163, 190, 225, 238, 245, 250, 256, 259, 267, 268, 285, 286, 296, 304, 312, 330, 337, 369, 404

- Tapesko, Grigory Ivanovich, 24, 25
 Tumanov, Oleg, 171, 177, 291
- United States Information Agency (USIA),
 34, 70, 81, 84, 86, 118, 120, 157, 164, 168,
 179, 231, 237, 245, 255, 256, 260, 277, 298,
 311, 319, 360, 377, 401, 403
 Urban, George, 120
 US Agency for Global Media (USAGM),
 328–30, 335
- Vaslef, Nicholas, 174, 178
 Voice of America (VOA), 13, 28, 36, 46, 60, 68,
 70, 100, 107, 110, 111, 123, 126, 127, 131, 143,
 167, 168, 170, 173, 174, 183, 187, 191, 192,
 195, 199, 217, 221, 224, 229, 231, 232, 235,
 247, 249, 251, 261, 263, 274, 276, 293, 296,
 297, 298, 314, 317, 320, 334, 335, 342, 347,
 350, 352, 363, 364, 372, 387, 392, 401
- Walter, Ralph, 92, 99, 101, 107, 119, 361, 362
 Ward, Elaine, 237, 283, 403
- Warsaw Pact, 26, 31, 55, 73, 101, 121, 213
Washington Post, 144, 336, 364, 368
 Wattenberg, Ben, 118, 157, 207
 WCCO, 80
 Western broadcasters to the USSR, 2, 5, 108,
 166, 248, 300, 344
 Western radio broadcasts, 1, 2, 130, 383
 Western radio stations, 60, 139, 191, 295, 374
Who's Who in the USSR, 29
 Williams, Fred, 68, 69, 81
 Williams, Tony, 58, 92, 93
 Wise, Sallie, 134, 155, 166, 176, 179, 201, 208,
 212, 237, 283, 322, 348, 403
 World Association of Public Opinion
 Research (WAPOR), 301, 356
 World Research International (WRI), 219, 220
 World War I, 11, 24
 World War II, 11, 22, 24, 29, 32, 72, 78, 115,
 119, 161, 238, 334, 364
- Yedigiaroff, Andre, 17, 18, 19, 20, 90, 91
 Yurenen, Sergei, 57

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